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# **Migrant Communication: Cuban-Americans and the media in Miami, FL**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
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# **Abstract**

This thesis examines an exile community's relation to media. In particular, it focuses on the case of the Cuban-American community and English- as well as Spanish-language media based in Miami, FL. Following the revolution under Fidel Castro in 1959, Miami developed into the capital of the Cuban exile. Over the past decades, the Cuban-American community formed a nucleus which attracted further migration from South America and the Caribbean. The incoming migrants contributed to turning Miami into a flourishing economic urban space. Furthermore, the Cuban-American community was a vital player in creating a vibrant media scene.

This thesis is situated in the context of ongoing debates on diasporic communities, notions of exile and liminality and theories addressing the tensions between the local, the national and the transnational. Empirical data for this project has been gathered in three periods of field work in 2006, 2007 and 2008. Journalists, media executives and active members of the Cuban-American community were targeted as key informants in the field. This thesis argues that the locale of a migrant community is of as much significance as national and transnational ambitions. The tensions between and imbrications of the local, national and transnational are evident in the media's content, aim and scope. By mapping Miami as a place and social space, relations between the Cuban-American and other communities are discussed in detail. The heart of the thesis contains an in-depth analysis of the different media, i.e. the press, radio, television, and the internet. The chapters explore how these media have interacted with early Cuban migrants as well as their relationship to the Cuban-American community today. The findings point towards diverse and complex patterns. Time of migration, cultural background and age are significant factors on an individual's approach to certain media. In turn, some media outlets clearly cater for specific segments of the community. A key point is that the media's role in relation to the Cuban-American community is a balance act of local, national and transnational remits.

The research contributes to debates on media, migration and communication research. It is the first comprehensive study of the Cuban-American community and their relationship to Miami-based media. Secondly, it takes a holistic view of the broader media ecology. The analysis is informed by the wider historical context. It encompasses detailed analysis of a variety of media and how these are interlinked. Moreover, this thesis employs an innovative research methodology in that it takes an etic, non-mediacentric approach to researching the media of a diasporic group.

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# Introduction

This research brings together two main fields of interests; that of migration and that of communication. Its primary purpose is to examine and analyse the communicative spaces and functions of the media for a diasporic community. The thesis focuses on the experience of the Cuban-American community based in Miami, Florida. It investigates the evolution and purpose of different media, in particular the press, radio, television and the internet, in relation to incoming migrants from Cuba and other countries. Moreover, it explores these changes in the context of established communities and in relation to changing demographics in Miami. The research focuses on generational differences in media use and the shifting allegiances and power structure within the Cuban-American community. The results of this study point towards the complexity of the Cuban-American community, towards the power struggles between different segments of the community and towards generational shifts regarding media use and relations to Cubans on the island.

It would go beyond the scope of this text to offer a complete list of all Spanish- and English-language media to be found in Miami and South Florida. Instead, this thesis examines specific media, developments and events that can be viewed as insightful and were signalled in the field as occupying a central position in the communication patterns of the Cuban-American community in Miami. The significance of transnational communication and transnational media shared with other Cuban-American communities based elsewhere, and indeed Cubans living in Cuba, is alluded to frequently. In addition to continuous desk research, the bulk of data was gathered during fieldwork which was carried out in Miami in 2006, 2007 and 2008. I have conducted over 40 in-depth interviews with journalists and selected members of the Cuban-American and the Hispanic community.

The latest figures of the US Census Bureau (2006) indicate that 44.3 million Hispanics are now living in United States, 14.8% of the total population. Between 2000 and 2006, the growth rate of the Hispanic population was 24.3% in contrast to the total U.S. population's

growth rate of 6.1 %. It is to no surprise then that ‘immigration’ is one of the buzz words of everyday life in the United States today. Similarly, European countries can be observed in an ongoing struggle with incoming migrants with discourses ranging from threats of ‘the other’ and fears of terrorism and cultural clashes à la Huntington to economic arguments about migrants allowing for the continuing functioning of the pension systems. Over the past decades topics such as integration, transnational communication, minority media and generational shifts in relation to media use and cultural change have thus found a secure place in academic as well as public (Western) debates. This thesis can be situated within these themes. It contributes a thorough analysis of the functions played by the media for the Cuban-American and other communities based in Miami in terms of identity negotiation and construction. It demonstrates how certain media are used for political purposes by specific segments of the community and how individuals and groups with different age and migration backgrounds have reacted to and influenced existing structures. Moreover, outcomes of the thesis show that later migrants purposefully employed other media than earlier arrivals to move away from dominant narratives. The choice of language has a significant role to play here as well. The findings of this research demonstrate that some media institutions were extremely reluctant to take certain groups and viewpoints into account. The thesis furthermore posits that some migration waves had a much greater influence on the development of Miami’s media scene than others. It also underlines the view that hybrid identities and transnational belongings can imply a greater problem for theorists than for the individuals in question.

## **Research Questions**

Following these themes and interests, there were three main research questions which guided this study:

1. What role do media have for negotiations of identity and community, notions of exile and politically contested issues among a group of migrants?

2. How have the media in Miami developed and changed through the arrival of Cuban migrants?
3. What differences can be observed between distinct media, i.e. the press, radio, television and the internet?<sup>1</sup>

## Historical background

The histories of Cuba and the United States are tightly knit. Having achieved separation from the Spanish empire in December 1898, it was the United States who took over the reins on the island.<sup>2</sup> Although nominally independent at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, historians agree that Cuba was under the aegis of Washington D. C. when it came to political decision-making processes (Benjamin 1990, Pérez Jr. 2009).<sup>3</sup> But this uneven relationship experienced a radical u-turn after 1959. Having forced the previous government under Fulgencio Batista out of power, Fidel Castro and his bearded warriors took to the streets of Havana accompanied by the cheers of the masses. Many of them, some close allies and friends during the revolution and the time spent in the woods of *El Oriente* Province, would eventually end up in Miami as his fiercest enemies. Some scholars (see for example Latell 2005) assert that it was Fidel's younger brother, Raúl Castro, who made the initial move towards turning Cuba into a Communist country. But irrespective of the fact of which Castro brother first harboured Communist sentiments, Cuba became a close ally of the Soviet Union in the 1960s. This association remained in place until the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 1990s. The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union thus brought the island into a precarious situation. It was literally situated in the front garden of the U.S. – a

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<sup>1</sup> I will follow Baym and Markham's (2009) suggestion in referring to the 'internet' as opposed to the 'Internet'. In their insightful anthology *internet inquiry*, they convincingly argue for spelling internet in lower case as it is neither a place you can go to nor a coherent communicative space or entity in itself. Baym and Markham (2009) see power and agency with the creators and users of the internet, rather than with the medium.

<sup>2</sup> A thorough and authoritative account of Cuban history is offered by Hugh Thomas (1971) in *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom*.

<sup>3</sup> I attempt to spell Spanish names with accents when appropriate. However, some authors and informants have altered the spelling, i.e. lost the accent, of their names and I aim to respect that. Depending on the original, I therefore included González as well as Gonzalez. In the case of Elián González, I have adopted the spelling with the accent.

strategically attractive position that the Soviet Union made good use of, for example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

Migration from Cuba to the U.S., in particular to South Florida, was not a new phenomenon. There had been a vivid exchange between the two countries in terms of art, trade and tourism. But the migration that started with the advent of the Cuban revolution in 1959 was of unprecedented dimensions. While Miami and Miami-Dade, the county it forms part of, was home to only 50,000 Hispanics in 1960, the figure rose to over 1.4 million in the year 2005, though it is worth remembering that illegal immigrants would not be included in these figures (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3 for a detailed overview).<sup>4</sup> Of the Hispanics based in Miami-Dade, people of Cuban origin form the clear majority with 794,883, followed by Nicaraguans (105,415), Colombians (94,511) and Puerto Ricans (94,264).<sup>5</sup> The Cuban-American community undoubtedly formed a nucleus which to a great extent attracted more Spanish-language migrants with other national backgrounds to settle in Miami. The global community of people with Cuban origin living outside the island is estimated to be 1.5 million.

Migration from Cuba to Miami has been characterised by distinct migration waves. The people arriving in the early 1960s were members of Cuba's upper and middle class. Mostly white and well-educated, they were welcomed by Miami's Anglo community. The shared understanding between early exiles and the host community was that a swift return to the island was likely. Soon after Fidel Castro's takeover of Havana, secret missions, plots and espionage began. It was during these early years of the exile that some segments of the community got involved with the CIA. One example of the CIA's cooperation with members of the exile community was the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion of 1961. Still today, many Cuban-Americans believe that President Kennedy had abandoned their men during the invasion by refusing to send air support. It is this incident that is said to have driven great

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<sup>4</sup> In addition, census methods of defining and identifying Hispanics have changed through the decades.

<sup>5</sup> All figures refer to 2007. See Appendix 3.

parts of the historic exile away from the Democratic Party and turned the Cuban-American community into a stronghold for the Republicans.

Instead of a quick return, more Cuban migrants made their way to the United States in the 1970s. 1980 brought the Mariel Boatlift, named after the Cuban port of Mariel. In an act of defiance, Fidel Castro allowed for Miami's Cuban-Americans to approach the island in boats to pick up relatives and friends. However, things were not as straightforward as they had sounded initially. Cuban-Americans did not always have a choice regarding whom they actually got to take with them. In addition to friends and family, they were forced to take prisoners, mentally ill people and those unwanted on the island (such as homosexuals). The Mariel Boatlift was a significant turning point in the relationship between the white Anglo community and the Cuban-Americans. It became apparent that the Cuban-American community was likely to stay for good. In addition, the city of Miami and Miami-Dade County were having great difficulty in dealing with the high number of incoming migrants. Between April and October 1980, circa 124,000 migrated to South Florida. Crime statistics rose and gave Miami a bad national and international reputation. In contrast to the historic exiles, later migration waves had less cultural capital and were of darker skin colour. Their motivation to leave the island was rooted more in economic than in political considerations. The historic exiles were often first- or second generation Cubans with a Spanish heritage. Their history and affiliation was closer to Europe than to South America. While the early exiles were mainly Catholic, later migrants had lived most if not all of their lives in a country strongly influenced by Communist ideology and often thus had an a-religious upbringing. Mariel marked not only a turning point in the relations between the Anglo and the Cuban-American community, it also brought home some fundamental truths about the changing make-up of Cuban society and life on the island.

Despite these difficulties, the Cuban Adjustment Act that had first been issued in 1966 allowed Cuban migrants a comparatively easy way into legal residency in the United States as well as obtaining U.S. citizenship. The 1990s became known for the rafters (*balseros*)

crisis. The downfall of the Soviet Union and its allies had serious economic repercussion in Cuba. The Castro government therefore termed those years the ‘special period’. Increasing deprivation on the island was followed by an increase in migrants that tried to make it across the Florida Straits on make-shift boats. In turn, the Clinton government decided to revisit the Cuban Adjustment Act. The legislative changes became known as the wet foot/dry foot policy. Cubans, who were now found at sea, had to be returned to the island while those who touched foot on U.S. soil were allowed to stay. Although the wet foot/dry foot policy added a significant hurdle for rafters, it has not led to an overall halt of people trying.

Finally, the current agreement between the U.S. and Cuba allows the Cuban government to issue exit visas for those wishing to leave the island, though the practicalities of this way of emigration are subject to the willingness towards cooperation on both side. In addition to this ‘direct’ way, some Cuban migrants opt for the possibility of travelling to third countries first, for example Mexico, and enter the United States thereafter.

Another piece of legislation to be kept in mind in this context is the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, also known as the ‘Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act’. Senator Jesse Helms (Rep) of North Carolina and Representative Dan Burton (Rep) of Indiana originally sponsored the bill. In contrast to what its formal title might suggest, the act was supposed to strengthen and extend the United States unilateral economic sanctions towards Cuba.<sup>6</sup> Aware of the complexities of the trade embargo and its consequences, informants in the field had very different opinions regarding this type of legislation. While some were convinced of its efficacy, one interviewee criticised it for having ‘loopholes the size of Texas’; others saw it harming the Cuban people and at the same time giving the Castro brothers an excuse for the poor economic state of the country.

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<sup>6</sup> For an in-depth analysis of national and international powers in play when negotiating, passing and putting into practise the Helms-Burton Act, see Perl (2006).

Cuba is one of the few countries still trapped in Cold War dynamics, and so are parts of the Cuban-American community. In the United States, other international issues and national concerns now take centre stage, much to the dismay of some segments of the Cuban-American community. Even though restrictions regarding travel and remittances are now under review, Barack Obama's inauguration as president of the United States has not changed the status quo in any significant way.

## Media in Cuba

One reason for selecting the Cuban-American community as a case study was their active and vibrant use of, and contributions to, Miami's media scene. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the active use of and participation in creating media was partly down to experiences the migrants already had with these media on the island. Cubans could choose between 58 daily newspapers in the 1950s. They were pioneers in radio programming. Radio was furthermore an important medium employed by Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries (see chapter 5). This lively and diverse media scene slowly changed for the worse after the Cuban revolution. Only 17 daily newspapers were left in 1992. In the same vein, there has been a decrease in the number of television and radio stations, which, were slowly brought under state control following the revolution.<sup>7</sup> In some cases, such as that of the magazine *Vanidades* (see chapter 4), migrants even brought patents with them and re-established their businesses in the United States, after they had their production facilities seized and were forced or thought it their best option to leave the island.

Soon after the Cuban revolution and with the Cold War a stern reality, a propaganda war ensued between the two countries. The CIA was quick to get involved; it founded (and funded) Radio Swan which was later to become WQBA 1140. Despite ongoing criticism,

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<sup>7</sup> All figures were quoted from *Cuba Facts* (Issue 43, December 2008) offered by the Institute of Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami. It is available at [http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu/FACTS\\_Web/Cuba%20Facts%20Issue%2043%20December.htm](http://ctp.iccas.miami.edu/FACTS_Web/Cuba%20Facts%20Issue%2043%20December.htm), and is based on statistics provided by the United Nations Statistical Yearbook.

examples of this state of affairs can still be found today. Radio and TV Martí, state-funded radio and television stations whose set-up is roughly comparable to that of the Voice of America, are broadcasting programmes to Cuba. Even though the following chapters mention and touch upon the activities of the Martí, they are not part of the main focus of this study. There are three main reasons for this; firstly, programmes from the Martí are not easily available to the Cuban-American community in the United States and are therefore of minor relevance when considering questions about media in relation to the community. In addition, because of continuing criticism due to the unknown efficacy of this state-funded undertaking, officials and journalists working for Radio and/or TV Martí were extremely reluctant to answer any questions about their involvement and to assess the output in terms of quality, content, aims, scope etc. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the Martí are ultimately controlled by the U.S. government and therefore not outlets that can react freely to events and incidences amongst the Cuban-American community.

The focus of this thesis is media targeting the Cuban-American community as well as interactions of other media outlets with the Cuban-American community. The thesis considers the continuation of selected media and practices amongst segments of the Cuban-American community in Miami. It traces the general evolution of media outlets from media addressing an exile community to revamped versions which now aim to address a wider Spanish-language audience. The results and conclusions of this study clearly testify to the complexities of the Cuban-American community, of the power structures between different Cuban migration waves, different age groups and the wider Spanish-language community. Although the media are often thought of as essential agents in democratic processes, it can be argued that some media outlets in Miami have supported and enhanced the defragmentation and isolation of some groups. They also bear witness to the uneven power constellations within the Cuban-American population in Miami.

This research furthermore focuses on the interplay between these media and the role journalists play within them. An analysis of the media and the broader media ecology allows



one to disentangle the dynamics between different types of media, in particular the press, radio, television and the internet. It will be shown how these media have been posited in very distinct manners by different segments of the community.

The remainder of this chapter presents an overview of the content of individual chapters.

## **Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 1 is concerned with contextualising this study and relating it to previous research in the field. The first section considers terminologies and definitions of diasporic communities and exiles. The notion of exile is of particular significance as, contrary to other terms explored in chapter 1, the Cuban-American community defines itself strongly through the exilic experience. Second, third and subsequent generations have an exile mentality, even though they have never been exiled themselves. The focus then moves on to look at the broader context of which diasporas form part. Theories of globalisation, cosmopolitanism and transnationalism serve as a backdrop for understanding the empirical data that follows. Furthermore, case studies which are of similar nature to this thesis will be introduced. The final section of chapter 1 considers literature, academic as well as popular, on Cuba, Miami and the Cuban-American community.

Chapter 2 contains the research methodology. It is at the same time a reflection and analysis of the ethnographic experience during data collection. The introduction exposes the reasoning behind the approach: specifically the recognition of the special role that journalism and journalists have in relation to memory, to our understanding of who we are, and who ‘the other’ is. Journalistic output influences what we know and think about, and what we do not find out about. The chapter then moves on to reflect on the experiences of interviewing journalists, media executives and selected members of the community on topic such as their work, their view of the Cuban-American community, Miami’s media scene and other topics relevant to this study. This is followed by an overview of how the collected data was analysed.

Chapter 3 examines the development of Miami as a place and a social space in relation to incoming migration from Cuba. The first section considers writings on space, place and memory. This is followed by an examination of the exilic state which emerged as a feature of the Cuban-American community in Miami. With the Cuban revolution now over fifty years old, the experience of the first wave of exiles, has itself been mythologized, as examined in the third section. *The Lost City* (2005), a blockbuster directed by and starring Cuban-American Andy García, is used as an example of the discourse surrounding those exiles that left in 1959 and the early 1960s. Simultaneously, the family presented in *The Lost City* acts as a trope for the Cuban nation. The chapter closes with a consideration of relations between the Cuban-American community and the Anglo and wider Hispanic community. This topic will be picked up again in chapter 6 when reports and reactions to the Elián González saga, the story of a Cuban boy who safely reached Floridian shores while his mother died at sea, are examined.

The following four chapters go to the heart of the matter. They comprise an analysis of local, national and potentially transnational media, i.e. press, radio, television and the internet, and their relationship to the Cuban-American community. Depending on the nature and terms of engagement between the community and the media in question, some chapters focus on Spanish- and English-language productions, while others concentrate on Spanish-language output exclusively.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Miami-based Spanish- and English-language press. Even before the arrival of the exiles after the Cuban revolution in 1959, Miami was home to the first Spanish-language newspaper in the United States, *Diario Las Américas*. *Diario* welcomed the exiles; the Nicaraguan-American family who run and own the paper have enjoyed a cordial relationship with Cuban migrants, perhaps due in part to the shared experience of exile. The rapport between members of the Cuban-American community and *The Miami Herald*, Miami's best-selling newspaper, has taken a very different turn. Sharp criticism and

commentaries of what incoming waves of Cuban migrants mean for the city, South Florida and the local Anglo community have dismayed those exiles whose primary concern was to have their family and friends start a new life with them in the United States. After initial reluctance, Knight-Ridder Inc., the company which owned *The Miami Herald* until 2006, made the strategic decision to accommodate Spanish-language migrants by introducing *El Miami Herald*. In 1999, *El Miami Herald* was revamped, including a name change to *El Nuevo Herald*. The latter section of chapter 4 scrutinises conflicts between the *Heralds* and the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF). Finally, a case study of the reporting of one particular incident, the Martí moonlighter story, is examined and wider emerging issues are discussed.

Miami's Spanish-language radio scene is explored in chapter 5. The first two sections give an overview of the general purpose of foreign-language radio in the United States and then trace the development of Miami's Spanish-language radio stations. Radio has always been 'the Cuban medium' and of all the outlets encountered in the field, radio stations and the journalists employed in them, are by far the strongest force in safeguarding and fortifying an exile mentality. The latter parts of the chapter examine two Spanish-language radio stations in greater depth: Radio Mambí and WQBA 1140 AM. Radio Mambí is known as the most belligerent station in the Miami area. The station and the way it operates bear witness to the existence of a tightly-knit and highly committed network of journalists (and freelancers) with a strong exile mentality whose focus is to 'right' the past. As a station, WQBA has a much younger feeling to it, although opinions in the field were split as to how 'Cuban' it is.

The subjectivity of perception in regard to a media output having a Cuban or Mexican or Colombian feel, is also a theme which runs through chapter 6 on Television, Cuban-Americans and Hispanic audiences. After a brief overview of the development and anticipated growth of Spanish-language television in the U.S. market, section two and three investigate the history and strategy of the two largest players in the market: Univision and Telemundo. Univision's Mexican roots are still strongly noticeable today, while Telemundo

has developed an alternative tactic which includes a significant percentage of in-house production. The following section critiques the notion of a Hispanic television audience and scrutinises the conceptualisation of Hispanics as a ‘diaspora in reverse’ (Sinclair 2005). As the analysis of Univision’s and Telemundo’s approach to programming will demonstrate, it is audience figures and advertising revenue which motivate the rationale of television strategists. The same holds true on a local level. The argument that television is not a unifying tool for the wider Hispanic community is further illustrated by and examined through the aforementioned Elián González saga.

The penultimate chapter addresses trends observed in relation to the internet and the treatment of Cuban-American and Cuban issues online. The first section provides a comparative analysis of the experiences of two bloggers, both concerned with Miami-based media, *The Miami Herald* and Radio Mambí respectively. The transnational component that the internet has to offer is explored in the following section by focusing on a Cuban-American student organisation called *Raíces de Esperanza* (Roots of Hope). With younger Cuban-Americans making efforts to comprehend and negotiate what the exilic experience means for their (collective) identity and lives, the switch from Spanish to English as the dominant language of second- and third generations is considered in the final section of chapter 7.

The last chapter brings together the findings of the preceding ones. The media examined in this work are situated at the intersection between the local, national and transnational, whereby the significance of place is emphasised also, and perhaps especially, for a diasporic group. The chapter considers the contribution of this thesis and contextualises its results. Furthermore, it looks at future research strategies that have resulted from the learning experiences of this project. It closes with brief words on the current situation of the Cuban-Americans, the United States and Cuba.

This introductory chapter has presented the starting points of this thesis. It has given an overview of migration from Cuba to the United States. It has outlined why the Cuban-American community and the media scene in Miami, FL make such an insightful case study on topics and themes relating to media and migration. The next chapter will place this study in the context of ongoing debates and also offer a theoretical backdrop for the empiric data that is to follow.

# **1. The Context of Research**

## **Introduction**

This chapter examines the existing body of work relevant to the present study. In order to gain a clearer understanding of germane terms and concepts, the following section considers concepts relating to migration, diasporas and the exilic experience. Widening its focus, the second part places migrant communities in a broader context and addresses theoretical approaches to globalisation, nationalism, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. Furthermore, it relates the present study to previous research of a similar nature. Finally, the chapter concludes by introducing writings on Cuba, Miami and the Cuban-American community.

## **Migrants, diasporas and the exilic experience**

The terms ‘exile’, ‘refugee’, ‘immigrant’, ‘displaced person’ are often used interchangeably in public but also in academic discourse, without a clear definition to distinguish one from the other. The same applies to ‘diaspora’ and ‘transnational communities’, ‘émigrés’, ‘migrants’, ‘expatriates’ and ‘sojourners’ to only give a few examples of terms in regular use when discussing issues related to migration. What makes matters slightly more complicated, is the split between the everyday use of terms, for example references made to ‘the exile’ during fieldwork on the one hand, and its connotation in academic research on the other hand.

The common denominator of the terms mentioned above is that they refer to the experience of displacement or relocation and the people who have undergone this experience respectively. Displacement is the move away from a centre, from the home or homeland. While internal displacement refers to displacement within the original homeland, external displacement means that one or several national borders have been crossed by the displaced person. The most prominent example of a displaced people is that of the Jews who were

forced to leave their homeland due to the Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman conquests. In Jewish thinking – as also reflected in Hebrew – the terms diaspora and exile can be used interchangeably (Peters 1999, 20). However, exile contains a stronger notion of the longing and languishing for a lost home or homeland. Added to that is the uncertainty about returning. So while exile can refer to one individual's experience of displacement, diaspora refers to the consequences of displacement as shared by a group.

## **Framing diasporas**

The past two decades have witnessed an increase in studies scrutinising diasporic communities from a cultural studies perspective. One indication of this scholarly evolution is the establishment of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* in 1991, which includes academic pieces committed to the study of traditional diasporas (Armenian, Greek and Jewish) and new transnational migration.

## **Typologies of diasporic formations**

According to William Safran (1991), diasporas can be characterised by six features. Apart from the experience of displacement that either current members of the group or their ancestors had to face, they retain a collective memory, a vision or myth of their mother country which Salman Rushdie (1991) referred to as 'imaginary homelands'. Furthermore, the shared memory maintained and – of course constantly negotiated by members of the group – is depicted against life in the host culture where the group does not feel fully accepted and integrated. As a fourth characteristic, then, the original home is seen as the 'true, ideal home' (Safran 1991, 83) to which either the group members themselves or the following generations should at one point return. In the meantime, diasporic groups engage in 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson 1992) which manifests itself in the commitment to maintain, support and help to restore their country of origin. As a sixth and last trait, Safran (1991) sees a continuing relation with the homeland which defines their 'ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity' (Safran 1991, 84). While these features can certainly

characterise some diasporas, it is questionable whether all aspects can be noted for all members of the community at all times. As the current case study indicates, vast differences regarding the level of engagement of community members quickly become apparent, to the extent that some members flee from the relentless discourse and activities sustained by others.

Especially when considering the situation of international voluntary migrants with high cultural capital, say for example university exchange students or white collar workers sent on long-term assignments abroad, the term diaspora does not seem appropriate. Then again, these individuals might indeed join some form of a community that would meet some, though perhaps not all of the characteristics outlined by Safran (1991).

In *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Robin Cohen (1997) distinguishes between three categories of diasporas. The first group are ‘victim’ diasporas for which he gives Africans and Armenians as examples. The second category are ‘labour’ and ‘imperial’ diasporas such as Indians and British. Thirdly, there are ‘trade’ diasporas like the Chinese and Lebanese and finally ‘cultural’ diasporas such as those migration waves stemming from the Caribbean. Cohen (1997, 23) criticises Safran’s (1991) characteristics of diaspora as he finds them repetitive, focusing on the relation to the homeland in four of the six points. He introduces his own catalogue of characteristics or ‘[c]ommon features of a diaspora’. They include:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
4. an idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;



a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and  
8. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.  
(Cohen 1997, 26)

In his typology, Cohen goes beyond Safran's strong emphasis on the diasporic community's relationship to the homeland. Especially the last four features characterise the here and now of a diasporic group and acknowledge that this state can also have positive aspects. Tsagarousianou (2004) acknowledges Cohen's (1997) attempt at improving our understanding of an 'ideal' diaspora. However, Tsagarousianou also points towards the fundamental weaknesses of such an approach: creating a definite list of characteristics does not allow for space to acknowledge the 'dynamic and fluid character of both diasporas and the volatile transnational context in which they emerge and acquire substance' (2004, 56).

Nevertheless, the number of points in Safran's as well as Cohen's definitions is an indication of the complexity of the term and the diverse phenomena it can be applied to. The underlying assumption of all members of a diasporic group looking back longingly at a lost home assumes a very static relationship to the home and a migrant who is completely entrapped by his or her own past or the family's past. Another weakness that Safran's (1991) and Cohen's (1997) typologies entail is the supposed homogeneity of a diaspora. In light of the findings of this study, it could in fact be argued that homogeneity amongst a group is impossible to achieve. On the contrary, it is debate and heterogeneity that have led to an ongoing confirmation and negotiation of a shared identity and have thus moved the community forward and kept it alive.

### **The making and unmaking of diasporas and their potential**

Further approaches to conceptualising diasporas can be found in van Hear's *New Diasporas* (1998) and in Braziel's *Diaspora: An Introduction* (2008). Van Hear takes on ten cases of migration crises, such as the expulsion of Haitians from the Dominican Republic or the situation of Mexicans in the United States among others. With a background in refugee

studies, van Hear's (1998, 47-50) venture point is to explore the dynamics of migration crises and the 'making' and 'un-making' of diasporas. An example of disintegrating diaspora, which he also describes as a 'regrouping' or 'in-gathering' of dispersed people, is the 'return' of the ethnic Germans to Germany from the USSR, Poland and other countries after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Van Hear (1998) acknowledges the term 'return' is not quite fit to describe the situation, as many of these returning migrants have actually been born abroad or lived abroad for the largest part of their life. Noteworthy in relation to this study is the main condition van Hear (1998) points out in order for 'return' migration to take place: there has to be political and legal willingness to allow for the 'return' as well as a space for them to be. The former condition requires a felt sense of belonging and a claim, which has been acknowledged by the 'home country', to be a part of the community in question. I will return to this point in chapter 3 on Miami as a place and social and communicative space. In relation to this case study, one could ask whether a return is still possible and intended and if there would indeed be the willingness to provide a space for Cuban-Americans on the island.

Brazier (2008) offers a thorough overview of historic diasporas and their role in framing today's thinking about these social phenomena. Early on, she points to one of the key difficulties that scholars attempting to conceptualise diasporic communities have to face: how does one summarise, theorise and write about diasporic experiences in general while also acknowledging the specific situation of each group? There is no easy solution at hand, apart from continuously reminding ourselves that what is presented here are 'just' general tendencies allowing scholars to frame individual experiences and consider existing patterns (or a lack thereof). What Brazier (2008) refers to on a macro-level also holds true when analysing a specific community more closely. It is worth remembering that there are some reoccurring issues when considering the Cuban-American community in Miami, however, the deeper one digs, the more individualised the findings are naturally going to be.

Furthermore, Braziel emphasises that it would be misleading to interpret diasporas as ‘victims’ of unfortunate (political, economic, environmental, social) circumstances. They do indeed have the potential for heightened productivity and creativity:

[D]iasporas are not overdetermined migratory formations: diasporas may be produced by the dominant flows of global capitalism, ethnic nationalisms, and corporate transnationalisms, among other forces, but diasporas are not merely receptive, passive structures; diasporas are also productive. Or, to reiterate an earlier point: power may be productive (of diasporas), but it is not always in control of what it produces. (Braziel 2008, 26)

Reducing contemporary and emerging diasporas to products of global capitalist structures, for example, would indeed strongly reduce their social and cultural features.

### **The dilution of a concept**

Similar to Safran (1991) and Cohen (1997), Khachig Tölölyan, editor of *Diaspora: A Journal for Transnational Studies*, emphasises the importance of a lost homeland in the process of diasporic identity construction. Diasporas, Tölölyan states, ‘insistently re-turn, turn towards the homeland, in the sense that they devote funds and human resource to attempts to assist or influence the economy, culture and politics of the homeland’ (1991, 5). Five years after the inaugural issue, articles included in *Diaspora* dealt mainly with these neighbouring and sometimes overlapping concepts: ‘diaspora, ethnicity, nationalism, transnationalism, globalization and postcoloniality’ (Tölölyan 1996, 8). But in the meantime, another practice has evolved that worries a number of scholars in the field. With the increase of such research topics, the term ‘diaspora’ has experienced a diluting process. According to Robbins (1995) the term ‘diaspora’ has sometimes been used with disregard for the historical context and in an uncritical manner. Braziel and Mannur underline this by stating:

Analogous to the problematic use of the term border within branches of area and ethnic studies in general, the term ‘diaspora’ risks losing specificity and critical merit if it is deemed to speak for all movements and migrations between nations, within nations, between cities, within cities ad infinitum. (2003, 7)

In accordance with Braziel and Mannur (2003), Tölölyan (1996 and 2007) calls for a clearer definition and limitation of the concept. He urges scholars in the field to come back to a consistent definition of ‘diaspora’ as he sees the concept ‘in danger of becoming a promiscuously capacious category that is taken to include all the adjacent phenomena to which it is linked but from which it actually differs in ways that are constitutive, that in fact make a viable definition of diaspora possible’ (Tölölyan 1996, 8). More recent work already has not altogether followed Tölölyan’s line of thought, perhaps also because ‘diaspora’ has developed into an academic buzz words that is thought suitable to describe new but similar social formations.

### **The Cuban diaspora**

So where does all of this leave the Cuban-American community in Miami and around the globe? Tölölyan is keen to distinguish diasporas from ethnic groups. As he (Tölölyan 1996, 17-18; Tölölyan 2007, 653) provides an example focussing on the Cuban-American, it is worth quoting him at length:

The lines separating ethnic behavior from diasporic are not always clear-cut, and they shift in response to a complex dynamic. For example, the Cuban-American “community” contains a few assimilated members, a large number of ethnics, and an even larger group, whose size is fervently debated, that forms an “exile community” committed to an overthrow of Cuban communism and to a physical return to the island; some of the exiles display the full range of diasporic behaviour, engage actively in political and cultural self-representation, and care about maintaining contact with Cuba and Cuban communities in other countries, like Puerto Rico, Mexico and Spain. I emphasize that the boundaries between these groups are not fixed but porous and fluid. They will continue to change as change emerges in Cuba and the United States’ attitude toward Cuba. The size and commitment of exiles, ethnics, and diasporics waxes and wanes in response both to internal dynamics of the community and in reaction to the policies, economy, and changing social and cultural allure of the host land and homeland. (Tölölyan 2007, 653)

With members of each fraction of the Cuban-American community thus potentially floating back and forth between groupings, it becomes impossible for the field researcher to permanently or even temporarily assign informants to a category. Besides, what would count

as an engagement with the homeland? Can listening to a Cuban-American music by Gloria Estefan or reading the poetry of José Martí be interpreted as a return to an ‘imagined homeland’ or is it just a regular free-time activity of Cuban-Americans that does not qualify as diasporic activity? Of course such categorisations would take the hermeneutic task of the researcher ad absurdum. Hence, even though Tölölyan’s analysis appears convincing, too restrictive categorisations are not helpful when researching the inner workings and dynamics of a community.

Despite these concerns, Tölölyan’s criticism is to some extent justified. The term diaspora has been used to refer to larger and larger groups of people in general, such as migrant workers, Muslims living in the West and Spanish-language speakers in the United States. I will return to the problematic of the latter example, constructing Spanish-language speakers in the United States as a diaspora, in chapter 6.

In his monograph on *Diaspora Politics*, Gabriel Sheffer (2003) offers a useful definition for the purpose of this study. Like Tölölyan, Sheffer laments the dilution of the term and therefore posits a definition that specifically refers to ‘ethno-national’ groups, thereby excluding all-encompassing approaches outlined above. Sheffer states that

an ethno-national diaspora is a social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries. Members of such entities maintain regular or occasional contacts with what they regard as their homelands and with individuals and groups of the same background residing in other host countries. Based on aggregate decisions to settle permanently in host countries, but to maintain a common identity, diasporas identify as such, showing solidarity with their group and their entire nation, and they organize and are active in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres. Among their various activities members of such diasporas establish trans-state networks that reflect complex relationships among the diasporas, their host countries, their homelands, and international actors. (2003, 9-10)

A further benefit of this definition is Sheffer’s emphasis on social and cultural (trans-state) activities of diasporas in their host countries, as opposed to the focus on an intended return.

These ethno-national diasporas in fact need to be settled if not permanently, at least long-term, in order to build and maintain the networks, groups and relations they require for such activities. This of course also includes media which are significant players in diasporic social and cultural activities. What role exactly they can play within the dynamics of a diasporic community, host country and homeland will be examined in detail in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

## **Exile and liminality**

Despite ongoing debates in the field as to what qualifies as a diaspora, scholars can agree that the circumstances and motivations of departure have a significant part in the organisational structures and emerging features of identity work by the group themselves and also by outsiders; migrant workers who came on a voluntary basis for economic reasons view themselves differently from political exiles who were forced to leave to save their lives. The first wave of Cubans arriving in the United States have stoically highlighted that they were exiles, not immigrants. The notion of exile will therefore be examined in greater depth here.

*Exilforschung*, the study of exile, has been an accepted discipline in the German-speaking academic sphere for several decades. However, the exiles in questions were mostly (Jewish) Germans and Austrians fleeing to other European and American countries during the 1930s to escape the terrors of the Nazi regime. Only in the last couple of decades or so has the term *Exilforschung* undergone a change, now not only referring to these historic cases of exile, but also including and, thereby acknowledging, the universal and constant flow of exiles from a great number of countries (Agha 1997, 7).

## **Banishment, (enriching) otherness and belonging**

The original meaning of exile, ‘banishment’ from one’s country over a certain period of time or for life, suggests that exile was and, in some cases, still is seen as a form of punishment. As a consequence, being in exile has been viewed as a painful process, filled with obstacles

and disappointments (Krispyn 1973). Other scholars have moved away from this negative viewing of exile, stating that ‘exile must also be defined by its utopian and euphoric possibilities, driven by wanderlust, and a desire for liberation and freedom’ (Naficy 1993, 6). A number of authors underline this perception, focusing on the (cultural) productivity of exiles, in most cases relating it to their special state of ‘in-betweenness’, which views exiles as neither belonging nor having a ‘natural space’ in the home nor in the host country (Naficy 1993 and 2001, Agah 1997, Hartenstein 1999, Elsaesser 1999, Trommler 1995, Becker 1995, Strack 1995).

Edward Said (1984) interprets exile as a means to achieve a privileged insight for intellectuals, while Salman Rushdie sees new types of people being created, who are rooted in ‘ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves – because they are so defined by others – by their otherness’ (1991, 124-125). These experiences and the overall positive perception of exile which can lead to a deeper understanding of the world might characterise the exilic experience of writers and academics who have managed to live a rather comfortable and successful life in the West. However, the realities of, for example, Burundian exiles in a Refugee camp in Tanzania, with their life to a certain extent depending on the support of international NGOs, are very different, as the work of Liisa Malkki (1995) illustrates.

The difficulties of life in exile are further underlined by Ghorashi (2004) who analysed the experiences of Iranian exiled women, now living in the Netherlands and Los Angeles. Ghorashi concludes that a ‘disrupted sense of time and place prevails. A disrupted sense of life in vacillating between the past and the present creates emptiness and insecurity, feelings that displace their sense of belonging’ (2004, 113). Cultivating a feeling of belonging goes beyond an established legal status. Having the correct papers, does not serve as an indicator of social integration.<sup>8</sup> Ghorashi’s (2004) findings indicate that the continuous emphasis of

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<sup>8</sup> Reoccurring public debates (see for example Gessler 2010 and *The Economist* 13 Nov 2010 (author unknown)) in Germany about insufficiently integrated Turkish and Arab migrants (the majority of them with

the migrants' temporary stay can support nostalgic feelings for the home country. As will be shown in the analysis of the Elián González story, this sense of belonging can also dissolve for established migrant groups. Reiterating a point mentioned above, Ghorashi (2004) underlines that the exilic experience is extensively dependent on the host society and generalisations therefore often fall short.

## **Features of Exile**

Exile – more than terms like immigrant and refugee – has a strong political connotation and can be seen as an indication of the circumstances of departure. The idea here is not to actually return to the original meaning of 'banishment', as exile can also be self-imposed. But, whether made voluntarily or involuntarily, the decision to leave one's country has an obvious connection with policies carried out by the government or the regime in power that the exile either suffers or opposes. Zolberg calls people who flee due to action carried out by the government or regime 'political refugees' (1983, 88). He furthermore distinguishes between three types of political refugees: 'the activist', 'the target', and 'the victim' (Zolberg 1983, 88). While the first opposes the government or regime through his or her political activities, the second faces harassment because of their affiliation to or membership of a certain social or ethnic group. Contrary to the first type, the victim is only passively involved in social or political conflict. Although this typography might give some insights on a theoretical level, it can be argued that in reality the different types can clearly be overlapping and one exiled person can indeed belong to all three types. Moreover, it could be problematic for a researcher to determine which type suits the characteristics of an informant. The claims made about the events leading up to the departure from the home country, especially if it is under the rule of a non-democratic regime, are almost impossible to verify. The researcher is thus left to decide whether or not she believes the verbal accounts of the informant.

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German passports) demonstrates the irrelevance of legal status when it comes to feelings of belonging and acceptance by the host society.



Exile involves an ongoing process of negotiation; negotiation of identities, negotiation between home and host culture, negotiation of past and present, of ‘descent’ and ‘consent’ (Sollors 1986):

Exiles attempt to hold on to their descent relations while becoming part of the consensus that forms the new host culture. These impulses fuse to create an uncanny, liminal state and a cultural threshold in which the liminars live in a continual state of otherness and exile from former and new attachments. (Naficy 1993, 9)

As a result of its inherent liminality and in-betweenness, the exilic experience is also characterised by the potential of cosmopolitanism (Park 1950, 376) which Naficy sees as accompanied by ‘a fundamental doubt about the self, reality, home, traditions – in short a doubt about absolutes, ideologies, and taken-for-granted values of one’s home or host societies’(1993, 9).

### **Exile and creativity**

The angles on exile outlined above resonate to some degree with writings by Vilém Flusser. In his essay on ‘Exile and Creativity’ (2002, 104-109), Flusser assumes that the exile, or the expelled, is taken out of ‘his [sic] customary surroundings’ which, in combination with the habits associated with that environment, function like a cotton blanket; it ‘covers up the facts of the case’ (Flusser 2002, 104). The expelled, however, is free to see things clearly and from a new perspective. The new situation, with new information, requires creativity in order to survive. This is not necessarily a bad position to be in. Evaluating the state of liminality and in-betweenness, Flusser therefore argues:

In a situation where one is accustomed to pitying the expelled, this positive assessment is itself unusual, and, according to the hypothesis, it should itself be informative. For it seems – according to the hypothesis – that those people who want to “help” the expelled to become ordinary again are, in fact, engaged in reeling him [sic] back into their ordinariness. This is an informative assumption, because it forces us to think about what is usual. The assumption does not justify the expellers, but rather it exposes the vulgarity of the expellers: the expelled were bothersome factors who were expelled to make the surroundings even more ordinary than before. Indeed, this assumption leaves the following question to our

discretion: Even without intending to do so, have the expellers not done the expelled a service? (2002, 104-105)

Again, these general characterisations and conceptualisations of the exilic experience should be dealt with cautiously as exile might not be a permanent state but rather a subjective, fluid and changing aspect of one's identity. While there might be a sense of liminality and in-betweenness inherent in the circumstances of an exiled individual or an exiled group, it does not necessarily lead to a cosmopolitan view of the world. On the contrary, the pains and hardship associated with an involuntary departure could also translate into rage, anger and a readiness to 'hit back'. The theme of cosmopolitanism will be explored further in the following section.

## **Diaspora and exile**

Bringing together the two concepts of diasporic and exilic groups outlined above, it becomes apparent that they share a number of characteristics. Both potentially continue to intensely relate to their home country and do not feel fully integrated or accepted in the host culture. Both consider the possibility of return. The distinction made for the purposes of this research, however, is that the exiles' displacement is mainly rooted in forces related to political action in the mother country, e.g. harassment by those in power, whereas a member of a diasporic group can have various motives to leave. This distinction was reflected by the use of term exile by informants in the field.<sup>9</sup> For all informants the term held strong political connotations. For some it was also defined through notions of banishment and not having the option of returning to Cuba or visiting the island in good conscience. The key to defining oneself as an exile was furthermore associated with the ability to remember life in Cuba. However, in the field, informants would also refer to an 'exile mentality' of subsequent generations born outside of Cuba. This notion would sit well with the characteristics of members of a diasporic community as outlined above.

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<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the term exile or the Spanish *el exilio*, employed in the field to refer to those parts of the Cuban-American community who arrived shortly after the revolution in 1959 and in the 1960s and early 1970s, terms such as 'diaspora' or 'diasporic community' seldom came up in everyday conversation.

## Theoretical concepts

This section considers theoretical approaches and concepts relating to diasporic communities and the notion of exile. The study of diasporas is strongly linked to work on nationalism, transnationalism, theories of globalisation (such as cosmopolitanism and cultural imperialism) and issues surrounding state and citizenship. Diasporas have the potential to challenge the (nation-)state. Together with global economic enterprises and governmental and non-governmental organisations, they are symptoms as well as phenomena of and driving forces for transnational connections that reach across (nation-)states and (in some cases easily across) borders.

### Migrants, (nation-)states and cosmopolitanism

One of the main points of discussion in the field is where to place migrant communities in relation to nations, (nation-) states, transnational activities and processes described under the catch-all term globalisation. Drawing on Gopinath's (2005) work on queer diasporas in South Asia, Braziel posits:

While diasporas may (and undeniably do) contest and disrupt the hegemonic forces of nationalism and globalization, refiguring the dominant discursive framings of nation-state and global capitalism, we must also remain cognizant of the ways that diasporas and diasporic forms of cultural production may also remain complicit and imbricate both with nationalist formation and "with capitalism [and may] shore up the dominance of the latter by making its mechanisms invisible," as Gopinath importantly reminds us (2005, 10). (2008, 26)

The past decade brought a considerable amount of scholarship (see for example Robins 2001, Georgiou 2006, Sassen 2001, 2002 and 2006) which has argued for the city as a highly useful and relevant unit of analysis. Some argue that the nation even presents a hindering category for interpreting it as a potential 'interruption', representing 'a disharmony in the scheme of the diasporic space' (Georgiou 2006, 9).

Among others, Khachig Tölölyan (1996, 4) cautions scholars who see diasporic formations primarily as a potential challenge or even a threat to existing (nation-)states. In his search for

reasons of the increased use of the term diaspora, Tölölyan (1996) points, among other factors, to the stateless power that parts of the Jewish diaspora (mainly those based in the United States) were able to exert when working towards establishing the state of Israel (see also Sheffer 2003). This success, he argues, provided an example for other dispersed groups to assume the traits of and identify themselves as a diaspora. Juxtaposing these dynamics to the previous point of diasporic communities challenging (nation-)states and their institutions, it becomes apparent that the (nation-)state order, at least in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, provided an aim that parts of the Jewish community were keen to work towards and have a share in. In other words, even though diasporic communities might through their mere existence pose a challenge to (nation-)state structures, members of these communities have nevertheless considered partaking in the (nation-)state formation as a goal worth striving towards.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that processes of globalisation and supra-national structures, like the European Union, have led to a questioning of the role and function of (nation-)states. German sociologist Ulrich Beck asserts that ‘the human condition has itself become cosmopolitan’ (2006, 2), referring to the international threat of terrorism and the protest against the Iraq War as conditions and events that reach beyond the (nation-)state. Even those protesting at the advancement of the processes of globalisation taking place today are in fact organised in a global networks themselves as Beck (2006) points out.<sup>10</sup> He also sees great potential for emerging cosmopolitan structures, especially within Europe and the framework of the European Union, and criticises the limitations of (nation-)states as the main realms of society:

For in the cosmopolitan outlook, methodologically understood, there resides the latent potential to break out of the self-centred narcissism of the national outlook and the dull incomprehension with which it infects thought and action, and thereby enlighten human beings concerning the real, internal cosmopolitanization of their lifeworlds and institutions. (Beck 2006, 2)

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<sup>10</sup> Resistance to globalisation is often misrepresented in public discourse. Organisations such as Attac (Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l’Aide aux Citoyens) are not against globalisation per se, but are concerned about the neo-liberal expansionist thinking and profit of global companies as the main beneficiaries of current structures (<http://www.france.attac.org/>; <http://attac.de/>).

Inter- and transnational media have a significant part in the cosmopolitanisation of lifeworlds. Especially television has the potential to let people take in the world, with global imagery and narratives available in their everyday lives. In her recent study on television news, Alexa Robertson (2010) posits that news programmes can have the capacity to further a cosmopolitan understanding of the world. However, this depends on several factors such as the style of reporting, background information given and vocabulary used by journalists.

Schlesinger cautions against Beck's optimistic view of 'boundarylessness' by drawing our attention to the 'continuing significance of the national dimension' (2007, 415); questions of belonging and of forming a sense of identity are still to a large extent founded within the realms of a nation. Likewise, communicative spaces, especially those determined by print media, radio and television (i.e. formerly analogue media) often mirror (nation-)state territories. No doubt there are indications and examples of transnational/trans-state network as well as media initiatives, such as Arte, Euronews and Telesur. An interesting starting point for this research is therefore to consider the media's position in this binary tension between states and nations on the one hand and transnational structures and networks and cosmopolitanism on the other. The Cuban-American community and its media is a well-suited case study here, as early migration waves in the 1960s started when the Cold War was going into another challenging phase and the importance of (nation-)states was generally unchallenged and unquestioned.

## **Understanding globalisation through *scapes***

Another framework often referred to in the context of theorising migrant communities is Arjun Appadurai's (2003) model of *scapes*. In 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,' Appadurai suggests a new entry-point for grasping the 'complex, overlapping, disjunctive order' (2003, 31) which came along with the new global economy. He argues that existing centre-periphery models, even those that consider a variety of centres and peripheries, are no longer useful nor helpful for our understanding. The same applies –

according to Appadurai – to the ‘the most complex and flexible theories of global development,’ (2003, 31) which have not succeeded in taking into account what Lash and Urry (1987) refer to as disorganized capitalism.

The complexity of the current global economy has to do with certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture, and politics which we have only begun to theorize.

I propose that an elementary framework for exploring such disjunctures is to look at the relationship between five dimensions of global cultural flow which can be termed: (a) ethnoscapas; (b) mediascapas; (c) technoscapas; (d) financescapas; and (e) ideoscapas. The suffix –scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes which characterize international capital as deeply as they do international clothing styles. (Appadurai 2003, 31)

Appadurai interprets the different *scapes* and an individual’s or a group’s perspective of them as imagined worlds, ‘the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe’ (Appadurai 2003, 31). For this piece of research, ethno- and mediascapas are of significance, although boundaries between different *scapes* are blurred. Ethnoscapas refers to

the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers, and other moving groups constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. ( Appadurai 2003, 32)

In Appadurai’s model, a diasporic group naturally forms part of an ethnoscape. What remains problematic, though, is the lumping together of highly diverse groups of people. A Congolese refugee and a Belgium tourist might share the common trait of mobility, but their motivation, livelihood and power status could not be further apart. While possibly a useful classification when considering global trends, ethnoscapas oversimplify the disparate positions within power structures between different types of travellers.

A second category worth noting in the context of this project are mediascapas.

Mediascapas refer both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspaper, magazines, television, stations, and film production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media. (Appadurai 2003, 33)

Appadurai emphasises the most important aspect of these mediascapes as their ability to provide images and narratives to people throughout the world. Distinctions between news and entertainment might become vague, leaving room for audiences to construct imagined worlds of their own. Even small communities in remote places will find access to ‘mediated messages’ from home (Sinclair/Cunningham 2000, 13). This notion can be linked back to the aforementioned characterisation of mediated cosmopolitanism. And, as in the rationalisation of ethnoscares, the mobile quality of mediascapes is emphasised.

However, there is a danger of automatically linking sheer possibilities of distribution and availability with consumption. Audiences are still going to be critical and selective in what they consume and how they relate to different media outlets and media content. In fact, for most people in the field, the origin of media content has proven a crucial element when evaluating and assessing a particular programme or article.

## **Mobility and space**

Thinking along the lines of Arjun Appadurai’s concept of *scapes*, Karim H. Karim sees transnational groups as vital players in the process of ‘globalisation-from-below’: ‘These groups have been developing intercontinental networks of communication that use a variety of media that include mail, telephone, fax, film, audiotapes, videotape, satellite television and the Internet’ (2003, 1). Karim also emphasises the importance of space and agrees with James Clifford (1997, 11) that the dynamics of travelling, translating into ‘diaspora’, ‘borderland’, ‘immigration’, ‘migrancy’, ‘tourism’, ‘pilgrimage’ and ‘exile’, alter the relationship people have with the space they or their ancestors used to call home, the space they find themselves in now and ‘imaginative’ spaces.

Exiles, sojourners and immigrants, voluntary or involuntary travellers and nomads challenge the constructs of the (nation-)state as characterised by a dominant ethnic group in a clearly defined and uncontested territory. Then again, Clifford also reminds us that

[v]irtually everywhere one looks, the processes of human movement and encounter are long-established and complex. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things. (Clifford 1997, 3)

In resonance with Karim (2003) and Clifford (1997), Homi Bhabha (1994) moves away from the idea of a long-standing and established notion of national identity and belonging: ‘The very concepts of homogeneous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities – as the grounds of cultural comparativism – are in a profound process of redefinition’ (Bhabha 1994, 5). Instead, he recognises a

space of intervention emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative invention into existence. [...] [T]here is a return to the performance of identity as iteration, the re-creation of the self in the world of travel, the resettlement of the borderline community of migration. (Bhabha 1994, 9)

John Sinclair and Stuart Cunningham criticise Bhabha’s (1994) concept for running the risk of celebrating ‘hybrid cultural activity’ ‘for its own sake of the ‘subject-in-progress’’ (2000, 18).

## **Contesting *scapes* and mobility**

In summary, Karim (2003), Clifford (1997) and Bhabha (1994) interpret mobility as a potential challenge to the (nation-)state. However, when it comes to border-crossing, a great deal of mobility is still controlled by the state and it needs sanctioning by at least one state. Rather than leading to a greater sense of openness and cosmopolitan attitudes, high mobility can also cause a strengthening of the existing order with citizens embracing a ‘them versus us’ narrative. How mobility impacts on states depends on who is moving, in which numbers and with what aim? The threat that is seen in immigrants with insufficient papers seeking to cross the U.S. border has led to calls for tougher controls, not an appreciation of difference, pluralism and mobility.



It is this underlying assumption of the ease of mobility that has been criticised by Khachig Tölölyan, arguing that it is overrated and overestimated.

[S]ome of the finest minds in the field, like Arjun Appadurai and James Clifford, have inadvertently contributed to privileging a logic of mobility that has become oddly attached to denunciations of nationalism. Between 1990 and now, as the current discourse of diaspora studies was emerging, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia collapsed and images of beastly behaviour by nationalists were everywhere; consequently, the language of nationalism was identified as the language of those who would commit ethnocide to achieve settled and rigid borders and of those who fancied themselves guardians of homogeneity and purity; meanwhile diasporas came to be celebrated as exemplars or advocates of penetrated and porous borders, heterogeneity, hybridity, and, importantly, mobility. (2007, 653)

Tölölyan's (2007) argument that the conceptualisation of diasporas have been used as a counterpoint to extreme forms of nationalism is a compelling one. Similar to the celebration of cosmopolitanism, one underlying flaw of theories that advocate the image of hybrid and open-minded migrants (as opposed to static and intolerant nationalists) could be the over-romanticised notion of diasporic and migrant life. Before leaving their home countries, migrants also formed part of a community and possibly saw themselves as part of a (nation-) state, so to anticipate an automatic shift – tolerance by default, if you like – once a border is crossed is probably expecting too much. This is not to say that this development within diasporic groups is not possible. A change of perspective certainly bears much potential, but they are not certain features of a diaspora as the following chapters will show.

Regardless of where one positions oneself in this debate, the media play a crucial role in the evolution of migrant communities. They are simultaneously indicators as well as driving forces in the process of identity formation of diasporic communities. How they operate as institutions and media outlets, how media content is produced and consumed gives researchers empirical clues regarding the dynamics of diasporic communities and their relations to home and host societies. Taking a macro-perspective, this can then also give indications on (global) flows, counterflows, (transnational/trans-state) networks, the position of the state and the quality of communicative spaces.

## Previous empirical case studies

Earlier studies of the media produced and/or consumed by migrant communities demonstrate the diversity and complexity that individual case studies entail. Diasporic media vary significantly in life-span, format, quality, target audience, motivation, aim etc. as a selection of previous research reveals. Dona Kolar-Panov (1997) focuses on the Croatian and Macedonian communities based in Western Australia and their use of videos from former Yugoslavia in *Video, War and Diasporic Imagination*. Christine Ogan (2001) examined media use and religious practices and beliefs of Turkish migrants in Amsterdam. Marie Gillespie (1995) concentrates on Punjabi teenagers in London and their use of media in the process of identity negotiation. Hamid Naficy (1993, 1999 and 2001) analyses the role of Iranian television for the Iranian community in Los Angeles and exilic and diasporic cinema in relation to the homeland while Myria Georgiou (2006) focuses on the Greek/Cypriot communities in London and New York and their (transnational) media consumption and hybrid identities.

A common point many authors in the field underline is the significance of media in the process of identity formation and negotiation for individual members of an exilic or diasporic community and for the community as a whole. Drawing on previous work by Ang (1989), Silverstone (1994), Hall (1991, 1992, 1997) and Morley (1991, 1999, 2000), there has been a strong focus on the reception of migrant media, with scholars methodologically often coming from an audience studies approach. A large share of data gathering is therefore carried out in places of consumption and in conversation with or by observing individual or smaller groups of media consumers. Consumption and personal production of new media content are acknowledged as cultural activity and as a way of relating to others in the community. The underlying concept is that media consumption forms an essential part of creating one's identity and communicative spaces around one through a mixture of media

content that is produced locally, in the country of origin or by members of another diasporic formation elsewhere.

Another common feature is the emic perspective of the researcher on his/her participants; Georgiou, Naficy and Kolar-Panov belong (at least in a very loose sense) to the community they are researching. As will become apparent in the next section, to a great extent the writing on the Cuban-American community also stems from Cuban-American scholars. With regards to emic perspectives, there is a definite need for more in-depth self-reflection on the part of the researcher.

A welcome addition to these case studies has been Kira Kosnick (2007) work on Turkish broadcasting in Berlin. It includes a substantial analysis of multicultural politics and cultural policy on the German as well as the Turkish side. In alignment with the present study, Kosnick's (2007) posits the continuing relevance of (nation-)states when it comes to migrant media in a European context.

Two other scholars whose solid contribution to the field formed a cornerstone in conceiving this project are Pamela Ballinger (2003) and Liisa H. Malkki (1995). Ballinger's *History in Exile* examines memory and identity formation of ethnic Italians who left the Istrian Peninsula after World War II and those who stayed behind. Ballinger's focus is not so much on the media as on 'memory-places', for example war monuments and museums, 'markers of memory' like local customs and cuisine, and 'markers of authenticity' such as dialects (Ballinger 2003, 23 - 25). Despite transnational media and the international network opportunities that digital media especially can offer, the physical and social space of diasporic settlements should not be underestimated. This is also underlined by Malkki's work. Malkki (1995) compares lives and narratives of two groups of refugees. Both groups consist of Hutus who fled Burundi in 1972 and are now based in Tanzania; one group lives in the refugee camp of Mishamo, the other in the town of Kigoma. While the Mishamo exiles aimed to construct a nation-like order and identity, the exiles in Kigoma 'dissolved

national categories' (1995, 4) and created a lively cosmopolitanism. Like Ghorashi (2004), Malkki therefore provides evidence for the relevance and importance of the host environment the exiles find themselves in and the impact this can bear on exile culture.

The present study has been informed by these case studies. The thesis makes a valid contribution to the field by exploring a new group of migrants. Furthermore, as will be outlined in the following chapter, it takes a different methodological route by moving away from an audience studies approach and also examines a variety of different media, their imbrications, links and interplays.

## **Latinos/as, Hispanics, Cuban-Americans and Miami**

Publications on Latino and Hispanic culture have seen an immense rise in the past three decades. Recent scholarship (Valdivia 2008 and 2010, Vargas 2009, Chavez 2008, García Bedolla 2009, Albarran 2009) bears witness to the media's multifaceted relationship with Latinos/as in the United States, ranging from representation of Latinos/as in music, film and television (think of Jennifer López, Salma Hayek, América Ferrera and Ricky Martin) to questions of transnational belonging and potential threats from undocumented migrants and the U.S.-Mexican border.

### **Constructed belongings**

For cultural and popular studies scholars as well as for researchers in the field of media and communication, the groups and communities now commonly addressed as Latinos/Latinas (on the West coast of the United States), Hispanics (on the East coast) and/or Chicanos/Chicanas (in the south west) present a 'fertile ground' for research projects (Río 2006). The above descriptors<sup>11</sup> indicate Latino/a identity is not as straightforward as

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<sup>11</sup> In the following chapters I will mostly use the term 'Hispanic' to refer to all people with roots in countries south of the United States and the Caribbean. This term was usually used by informants in the field.

branding consultants and advertising executives might like to claim.<sup>12</sup> Esteban del Río asserts:

These complexities call for wider memories and deeper understandings of how different groups are constructed and positioned in relation to each other. However, contemporary expressions of popular and public culture contain few acknowledgements of the historical presence of U. S. Latina/o populations or the ongoing civil rights and political movements that received greater public attention in the 1970s. Instead, general market media texts and mainstream popular culture reconfigure – if not invent – a new Latina/o imaginary for Anglo and capitalist sensibilities and celebrate Latina/o life as an exotic, spicy, and new addition to the multicultural mainstream. (2006, 389)

Similar criticism had already been expressed a decade earlier by William V. Flores and Rina Benmayor who argued that pluralism does not go all that far in U.S. society. Instead, difference is only allowed to be celebrated in confined spaces and at particular times, such as specific holidays, allowing public spaces to remain ‘culturally neutral’ and thereby endorsing ‘the dominant culture as normative’ (1997, 9). Inequalities and power struggles on the other hand remain unchallenged and unaddressed. On a superficial level the above concerns might not apply to the Cuban-American community based in Miami. As will be shown in chapter 3, new structures of Cuban-American dominance bring challenges for community relations, for example with other Hispanics and the African-American community.<sup>13</sup>

## **On Miami and Cuban-Americans**

Writings about Miami and the Cuban-American community can be broadly situated within three different categories: journalistic accounts, self-reflective and (auto-) biographical investigations by members of the Cuban-American community and academic writings. With

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<sup>12</sup> The constructed nature of Hispanic identity and its inherent diversity has also caused methodological concerns. Who is considered Latino/a or Hispanic in U.S. Censuses has changed over the past decades. Furthermore, whether general statistics on Hispanics apply to the same degrees to all sub-groups is more than doubtful. For a detailed exposé of this issue see for example Soruco (1996, chapter 2) and Valdivia (2010, 14-21).

<sup>13</sup> In the field, the term ‘African-American’ was rarely used. Instead, informants referred to the ‘Black’ community.

many Cuban-American scholars researching and analysing their personal, families' and community's roots and routes, distinctions between these different texts are often blurred.

Miami is a fascinating place for scholars, journalists and other writers alike. Its diverse communities, its evolution from a small town into a major economic centre of the south east, especially in relation to Central and South America and the Caribbean, and the challenges this transformation brought with it, have been examined by several academics, including Portes and Stepick (1993) and Grenier and Stepick (1992) and Stepick et al. (2003).

One of the most well-known and acclaimed accounts of Miami and its entangled relationship with the Cuban-American community is Joan Didion's (1987) *Miami*, which has not lost any of its appeal over the past twenty plus years. Like the majority of texts, Didion too stresses the strong ties between Havana and Miami that go back further in time than the revolution of 1959:

Many Havana epilogues have been played in Florida, and some prologues. Florida is that part of the Cuban stage where declamatory exits are made, and side deals. Florida is where the chorus waits to comment on the action, and sometimes to join it. (1987, 12)

The spatial proximity and the reciprocal immediacy in people's minds on either side of the Florida Straits, also feature highly in *The Exile* by David Rieff (1993) and are underlined by the subtitle: *Cuba in the Heart of Miami*. To a greater extent than Didion (1987), Rieff outlines the cleavages within the Cuban-American community:

People might disagree about what a post-Castro Cuba should look like. They most certainly did disagree about political strategy, since exile politics was, predictably enough, riven by faction and divided into any number of competing, often mutually antagonistic groupings. One could divide Miami into those who supported the Cuban-American National Foundation and those who did not, and further, into those who had once supported it but couldn't stomach Jorge Mas Canosa's leadership and those who did not support it ever but who viewed it as a useful tool for pressuring the U.S. government. (1993, 52)

This theme also features prominently in the following chapters of this thesis. Then again, while political views might produce divergence, the love for and memories of Cuba keep alive a sense of community.

The glue for communal sentiments, acts of soul-searching on what it means to be Cuban/Cuban-American and reflections of one's own experience within the wider political, social and economic events that have influenced people's lives have in fact produced a considerable amount of biographically motivated output (Pérez Firmat 1994 and 1995, Levine and Asís 2000, Levine 2001, Cornillot 2009, de los Angeles Torres 1999 and 2003, Gjeltén 2008, Castro Ruz 2009, Saralegui 1998, Medina 2002). For the scholarly reader, de los Angeles Torres and Pérez Firmat, both academics, offer a particularly rich and detailed analysis of growing up as a Cuban-American in the United States and of Cuban-American politics, history and identity.

Journalist Ann Louise Bardach added to the collection with *Cuba Confidential: Love and Vengeance in Miami and Havana* (2002) in which she examined processes and events of Cuban, Cuban-American and U.S. relations through the prism of family relations. While these accounts can provide useful background information, there is at times a tendency to dramatise events. An informant in the field expressed her clear dislike of Bardach's (2002) account as it puts a lot of emphasis on the militant elements of the community and makes it sound as if Cuban-Americans were 'worse than the Mujahidin'.

Andrea O'Reilly Herrera (2001), motivated by her own heritage, started to gather testimonies about what it means to be Cuban and to live in exile. Perhaps not surprisingly, a great number of the responses came from first-generation exiles who had left Cuba in 1959 and the early 1960s and from their children (Herrera 2001, xix). Another example is Román de la Campa's *Cuba on my Mind* (2000). His is a personal account of his arrival and life in the United States and the relation between the exile and Cubans on the Island. Like 14,000 other minors, de la Campa joined the Peter Pan Programme, now often referred to as *Pedro*

*Pan*. This programme was ‘conceived by the U.S. government and the Catholic Church to help upper- and middle-class Cuban children flee the revolution during its early years’ (de la Campa 200, 37; pedropan.org). Like many other left-wing intellectuals, de la Campa has difficulties to find his place within the Cuban-American community: ‘My sympathies for the revolution had found their limit – a phase that arrives only after one has seen it from the inside – but the politics of Miami did not become any more acceptable to me as a result’ (2000, 83).

Other authors questioning and scrutinizing the politics of *el exilio* (the exile) are Hernando Calvo Ospina and Katlijn Declerq (2001) in their collection of interviews with prominent Cuban-American figures, such as the general secretary of the paramilitary group *Alpha 66*, Andrés Nazario Sargén, the president of *Cuba Independiente y Democrática* (CID), Huber Matos Benítez, and Miami’s suffragan bishop Monsignor Agustín Román. The collection gives testimony to the strong sentiments, the anger and obsession involved in the discussion of how to deal with Castro and a post-Castro Cuba, sentiments that are – for the outsider – challenging to understand in their fierceness.

Academic writers have researched and interpreted the Cuban exile community through very diverse spectra, coming from a range of disciplines and various methods of data collection. In *La Lucha for Cuba*, Miguel A. de la Torre (2003) convincingly examines the use of religious terminology and beliefs that support the argument of the struggle, *la lucha*, which itself can be a religious expression. It is generally used to refer to the fight of the exile community against communism, the ‘forces of evil’, all combining in the person of Fidel Castro. Like a great number of scholars in the field of Cuban or Latino/a Studies, de la Torre is a member of the community himself. He accentuates this when stating:

My hatred for Fidel Castro has been ingrained in me since childhood. From a very young age, I have considered Castro the earthly personification of Satan. My earliest memories are of extreme poverty in New York City, where I recall my parents personally blaming Castro for our plight. (2003, xv)



De la Torre argues that the concept of *la lucha* is employed by the ‘children of light (Exilic Cubans)’ to ‘justify the power and privilege they have achieved’ (2003, xvi). His work also provides a fascinating reading of the Elián saga and its instrumentalisation by the Cuban as well as the U.S. governments and the exile community including religious groupings (de la Torre 2003, 1-13). De la Torre’s critical engagement with his early ‘education’ about the Cuban leader is useful to keep in mind for this thesis. Otherwise it might almost be impossible to comprehend the fierceness of the conflicts and why some individuals are willing to dedicate all of their free time to this cause.

Taking a step back and examining *el exilio* from a broader historical perspective, María Cristina García’s *Havana USA* (1996) looks at waves of emigration from Cuba, distinguishing in broad terms between emigration in the years between 1959 and 1972 and the Mariel Boatlift of 1980. While the first group, sometimes also referred to as ‘The Golden Exiles’ consisted mainly of white, Cuban middle- and upper-class professionals who feared repression, loss of property or possibly worse (García 1996, 13) after the revolution, the Mariel émigrés

came of age or lived most of their adult lives in Cuba’s new revolutionary society. They were the so-called *hombres nuevos*, the New Man, or New Cubans, produced by the revolution. Many of them had no experience to which they could compare their lives under Castro; thus, their migration was prompted by a different reality. (García 1996, 6 )

In contrast to the first group, they were mostly non-white and less educated. Furthermore, the Cuban government had expelled a ‘sizable number of felons’ to discredit the exile community and punish the United States. The desired effect was achieved and the Mariel Cubans became ‘one of the most stigmatized immigrant groups in American history’ (García 1996, 6). The difference in characteristics and reception by the host culture of these groups of Cuban exiles, refugees and immigrants has led scholars to re-visit exile identity (de los Angeles Torres 1995) and to reframe the Cuban exile model (Mirabal 2003). María de los

Angeles Torres (1995) sees the Cubans on the island and the exile Cubans moving beyond the dichotomy which has formed such an integral part of their identity:

Something new may be in the making as a generation that grew up across a divide discovers its other half. Artists, critics, and scholars of the various exile and diaspora generations are sharing experiences with each other in Miami.[...] There is a common search, a similar disillusionment, a common political vision, and a shared generational experience across borders. This reunion of generations does not necessarily have a happy ending, but it has taken a first step toward gaining an understanding of differences, a necessary requirement of reconciliation. (1995, 232)

De los Angeles Torres's hopeful statement is somewhat echoed in chapter 7 of this study. The examined organisation, *Raíces de Esperanza*, tries to distance itself from the approach of traditional exile organisations and start off with a clean slate. However, the findings suggest that it is difficult to cut loose from history and traditions completely.

Also thinking beyond the current dichotomy of *la lucha* (the struggle), Nancy Raquel Mirabal argues for 'a more expansive framework, one that links the history of pre-1959 Cuban diaspora with that of the post-1959 diaspora' (2003, 368). Mirabal criticises the fact that research has focused extensively on Cubans who migrated after the revolution. As a result, she sees 'the over-emphasis on the 1959 exile model' resulting 'in a fragmented Cuban-United States historiography; one that has not weathered recent political and economic developments well' (2003, 379). While Mirabal is right to call for a greater awareness of the pre-revolutionary Cuban history and U.S.-Cuban relations, Fidel Castro's take-over of Havana did signify an unprecedented shift in the 200 year long history of these two countries (Thomas 1984, 9). It marked the start of the migration of about one million Cubans to the United States. This study meets Mirabal's (2003) concerns by taking previous media use and historic media institutions on the island into account. Moreover, it questions which segments of the Cuban-American community are in fact making use of and controlling which media.

The last work to draw attention to here is Gonzalo R. Soruco's (1996) *Cubans and the Mass Media in South Florida*. Soruco (1996) offers useful background information on Spanish-language television and radio available to Cubans based in Miami and its surroundings. He provides an extensive collection of data regarding viewing habits and programming. Soruco furthermore gives an account of the changes made within the *Miami Herald* to accommodate the Cuban community, resulting in the production of *El Nuevo Herald*. His study aims to give a general overview of media use but does not look at aspects of identity formation, power structures and belonging in relation to media, a gap this thesis aims to fill.

## **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has provided an overview of key terms, concepts, themes and the specific literature relating to this study. It started off by characterising, framing and contextualising diasporic communities and the exilic experience. To a certain extent, the evolution of the field was accompanied by a dilution of terms. Highly diverse social formations have been referred to as diasporas in popular as well as academic discourse. Common ground seems to exist when it comes to distinguishing between old and new diasporas: the prime example of a classic diaspora is that of the Jewish people, the dispersal of one people into many new host countries. New diasporas are characterised by more diverse circumstances regarding their exodus, settling in a new homeland and dealing with the notion of return. The acknowledgement of changing migratory patterns in the face of economic, environmental, social and political changes has made this an exciting field of study while simultaneously diversifying it to an extent that makes generalisations and comparisons a challenging undertaking. It is to no surprise then that eminent scholars such as Khachig Tölölyan have cautioned against a continuous moving away from the a more 'traditional' perspective on what constitutes a diaspora.

What is at stake, in particular, is the positioning of the homeland in conceptualisation of diasporic formations. While the relationship to the homeland could be rather straightforward

in a homogeneous group of first generation migrants, the situation gets more complex when later waves of migrants and those born in the adopted homeland join the group. This is one reason, why Sheffer's (2003) definition of an ethno-national diaspora was found best suited to characterise the Cuban-American community. Sheffer situates diasporic activities in the 'here and now' and does not overly rely on imaginary travels to a past paradise and future possibilities of return.

The above chapter then focused on debates about nationalism, transnationalism, processes of globalisation and cosmopolitanism. Diasporic groups can be seen as drivers and as upshots of ongoing shifts in these realms. While there seems to be a strong argument made for the destabilisation of the (nation-)state through highly mobile migrants, transnational communities and hybrid individual and collective identities, some scholars argue that mobility has been over-estimated. In this context, the media form an entry point of analysis. They can serve as indicators for power relations, of belonging and identity. Their aim and scope characterise the relation between diasporas, their home and their host societies. The difficulty that arises here, however, is that findings might be specific to one particular group and/or one particular locale requiring caution regarding generalisations.

The majority of previous empirical case studies analysing diasporic communities and their media came from an audience-studies perspective. This thesis will fill a gap by taking individual media and the journalists working for them as a methodological starting point. The underlying methodology of this thesis will be introduced and discussed in detail in the following chapter. Furthermore, while earlier studies often examined one specific medium, for example transnational television, this study offers a systematic analysis of how different types of media, i.e. print, radio, television and the internet, relate to the diasporic community and to each other.

The last section of this chapter addressed the significant amount of interest the Cuban-American community has received from scholars and writers from a range of disciplines,

and posed the problem of emic analysis. Taking an etic approach, this study provides a counterpoint to Cuban-Americans analysing their own community.

## **2. Going to Miami, FL: Reflections on Methodology and the Research Experience**

### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the methodology employed for the research project. Primary data was gathered through ethnographic fieldwork, which included 38 semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Other methods utilized were archival and desktop research. In addition, this chapter brings a broader perspective of the researcher in the field, the relationship between the researched and the researcher and finally touches on the experience of life as an (ethnographic) researcher. After all, this project has accompanied me with varying degrees of intensity for the best part of six years. In contrast to other parts of this thesis, the ‘I’, the persona of the researcher, is much more prevalent here. Arguably to a greater extent than other research methods, fieldwork is a method, or rather a mix of methods – including interviews, (participant) observation, casual conversations, reading and experiencing primary and secondary sources – that has a significant embodied and personal dimension. I follow Amanda Coffey’s line of thought in considering field work as ‘personal, emotional and identity work’ (1999, 1).

The methodology evolved out of a post-positivist and explorative approach to research. From the start it was assumed that notions of identity and community are in constant negotiation, fluid, ever-changing and hybrid (Georgiou 2006). Feelings of belonging and the notion of being a part of a particular group or a particular segment of a community etc. are not rigid but in motion. What is captured here, therefore, is a snapshot of the Cuban-American community and Spanish-language media in Miami as experienced by one researcher at a specific point in time.

## Underlying conceptualisations of media and journalism

The media are agents of particular importance in the process of identity formation, the construction of shared identity traits and the concept of an identity as a community. Media consumption, the process of selecting newspapers or programmes that one enjoys to read or to watch for a number of diverse purposes (information, entertainment, relaxation etc.), forms part of constructing one's own identity and is used as one possible indication as to how one positions the self within the community. This also applies in reverse, i.e. the conscious choice to not watch a TV show or listen to a radio programme can be interpreted as an expression of a separation of the individual from a segment of the community. An example of this process would be a Cuban-American who would regularly tune into shows like Armando Pérez-Roura's *Mesa Redonda* on Radio Mambí to hear confirmed a hardliner approach to U.S.-Cuban relations and join in a certain discourse about world politics, the Cuban government and the role of the exile community. Equally, another member of the community might make the conscious choice of never (again) tuning in to Radio Mambí – and particularly not to any shows hosted by Armando Pérez-Roura. The non-consumption of programmes is therefore likewise used as an element in the construction of one's own identity and utilized as an indication of positioning oneself within the community, belonging to or agreeing with certain segments of the community. It is worth noting that the negotiation of the individual's relationship with and within the Cuban-American community is of course one of many. It is taking place simultaneously to others, for example in relation to one's neighbours, work colleagues, the wider U.S. society and any other social encounter. I will return to this point in respect of the interview situation.

Another line of reasoning that informed the conception of the project and the chosen methodology is that the media are important agents with regards to memory conservation, feelings of nostalgia and a discourse of current events that is highly informed by the past. As Sturken suggests, media output feeds into personal memories and influences the individual's understanding of his or her own memories:

Cultural and individual memory are constantly produced through, and mediated by, the technologies of memory. The question of mediation is thus central to the way in which memory is conceived in the fields of study of visual culture, cultural studies and media studies. This means that concepts of memory in these fields tend to consider it dynamic, contagious and highly unstable – the famous photograph becomes a part of an individual's memory and personal memory is incorporated into a narrative film; we all have 'personal' memories that come to us not from our individual experience but from our mediated experience of photographs, documentaries and popular culture. (2008, 75)

Following this argument, even our understanding of the past – and therefore of the present and future – is not fixed. It is permeated by conversations, by information gained at a later stage, be it, for instance, through informal discussion with friends, books or a media text. This is underlined by Carolyn Kitch (2008) in her response to Sturken (2008). Drawing on Sturken (2008) and Carey (1988 and 1989), Kitch emphasises the significant relationship between memory and journalism:

Journalism as a site of memory construction is taken for granted, like air or water – merely the carrier of the thing itself, the memory event or theme of interest. In fact, the relationship between journalism and memory is complex and significant. For much if not most of the public, journalism is a primary source of information about the past and shared understanding of the past. It also is a main site for public anticipation of memory: as 'the first draft of history', journalism is also the first draft of memory, a statement about what should be considered, in the future, as having mattered today. (2008, 311-312)

In Kitch's model, journalism fulfils several functions. It is in itself a site of memory construction. It simultaneously attracts, engages and interacts with other sites of memory. It causes some players, i.e. journalists or active citizens, to initiate a counter perspective that in turn feeds into the collective memory and the collective understanding of a community. Therefore, Kitch argues, 'journalism is a process rather than a product. It is not a 'window' through which we can view something else, as many memory scholars have regarded it. Nor does journalism sit at the top of hierarchical truth pile, as many journalism scholars assume. Journalism is *inside* memory; it is at its heart' (2008, 318).



## Choice of research methods

Absorbing and monitoring output of different media organisations in Miami was highly enriching for the general understanding of the local, national and transnational media scene. Selected examples of media texts are used to illustrate the argument of this thesis. However, discourse and textual analysis of a sample of media texts are not best-suited to fully answer the research questions. The main reason for this was that thoughts, sentiments and reactions of members of the community, journalists and non-journalists, were to be the focus of this project, as opposed to the researcher's interpretation of selected texts. All research questions aimed at how members of the community perceived, thought of, made sense of and reacted to media, (fellow) journalists and their output and which role this has to play for the dynamics of the community. To answer these research questions, it was indispensable to be aware of current issues discussed in the media. However, the analysis of media organisations and the interpretation of their output by members of the community and by people working in the media were deemed the best approach to answer these research questions.

Following Kitch's (2008) argument and in order to observe the routes of communication, the negotiation of issues and interests taking place between different media and the Cuban-American community, particular emphasis was placed on the role of the journalist as a key agent in this process. Journalists are seen to fulfil multiple roles; throughout the research process – in and outside of the field – they were constructed as gatekeepers, as analysts, as politically active community members, as significant players in the fight for democracy in Cuba, and as a critical audience for the output of their colleagues. This is not to say that these roles are exclusively filled by journalists, or that every single journalist saw him- or herself in one or several of these parts. But all interviewees, Cuban-Americans and people of different descent, were very aware of and sensitive to the needs of this particular community and the media's contribution in this respect.

The following paragraphs will consider advantages and difficulties of gathering and interpreting ethnographic data. Given the cultural dimension of this project, particular emphasis will be laid on the experiences of the researcher in the field.

## **Fieldwork in Miami**

‘Research is hard work, it’s always a bit suffering. Therefore, on the other side, research should be fun’, asserts the sociologist Anselm Strauss (2004). His brief summary gives a first glimpse of the encompassing experience that fieldwork can be. This section provides an overview of my experiences during periods of field research in Miami, Florida. I visited Miami in July 2006 (for approximately four weeks), in January 2007 (approximately four weeks) and again in October 2008 (for two weeks). The main reasons for all research trips were to carry out interviews with journalists, media executives, PR professionals and people I had identified as active members of the community. Moreover, I was keen to experience life in Miami and to get a first-hand impression of a city I had previously only studied from a distance. Also, I was eager to get a closer look at the media scene of Miami and gather data, mainly articles from various newspapers, listen to radio programmes and watch TV to get a sense of the output on offer from various providers.

In total, I carried out 38 in-depth, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, twenty-four with men and fourteen with women. Apart from one, all interviews took place on a one-to-one basis and all interviews were face-to-face. Three further interviews were conducted via email. I met some interviewees more than once, say in a more social context or at events which they also attended as guests. In addition to ‘official’ interviewees, there were a number of individuals who provided most helpful information that I included in field notes.

Information on interviewees and the time and place of interviews are included in Appendix 6. Debates in the social sciences point towards the ambiguity of how to deal with details of research participants and places (Nespor 2000, Shulman 1990, Wiles et al. 2008). While

methods textbooks and guidelines disseminated by research associations generally emphasise the importance of confidentiality, assumed to be best accomplished by anonymising participants' identities, there are few instructions on how *exactly* this is to be achieved in the context of qualitative research.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, if anonymisation has taken place, there is rarely an account given on how this was done. It is the researcher's call to judge that the process necessary to maintain promises of confidentiality made to interviewees is balanced with the validity of data for primary and secondary use. These concerns are especially prevalent when dealing with so-called 'vulnerable' research participants. On the other hand, there have been calls for viewing participants as 'empowered' individuals who, in many cases, might be in favour of seeing their name next to a statement they have made. Anonymisation as a default procedure can therefore silence individuals when they would prefer their voice to be clearly heard and identified.

As I experienced research participants as eloquent, educated and responsible individuals, who were often familiar with the practices of academic research, I decided to include interviewees' real names in the chapters and in Appendix 6. However, for certain quotes, the source is kept anonymous. This was done for one or more of three reasons; firstly, to reflect a general sentiment noted in the field. Assigning the quote to one particular interviewee would counteract the way in which it is used in the text and misrepresent the frequency with which a particular sentiment was encountered in the field. Secondly, no source is given when agreements towards this end were made between the interviewee and me. Finally, if my judgement is that this quote could be problematic for the interviewee and/or for his or her family and friends I made a choice to anonymise the quote by not including the research participant's name.

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<sup>14</sup> Thomson et al. (2005) offer an insightful account on their experiences of anonymising personal details of interviewees. One of the main challenges is to disguise identities to an extent that even insiders would not be able to recognise the research participant while not losing relevant contextual details.

## First encounters

My first point of contact in Miami, Donn Tilson, is an alumnus of Stirling University (where I first started my PhD). Donn is an associate professor at the University of Miami. Without him and his support, this research project would probably not have taken the same route and I would have found it much more challenging to find suitable interview partners. Donn was able to accommodate me at the libraries of the University of Miami – a private institution with facilities that are generally not open to the public. The University of Miami also hosts the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC), home to the greatest collection of Cuban exile newspapers. With Esperanza de Varona, the chair of the CHC, I had found another invaluable source of knowledge about Cuban exile publications as well as the history and people of Miami's Cuban-American community.

My first interview in Miami was with a PR professional, Fernando Figueredo, who was able to give me a munificent overview of the local media scene and some of the issues that were at stake in Miami and the different types of media. Thankfully, Fernando was very encouraging about my project and he was more than helpful when it came to putting me in touch with a number of people working in different media organisations.

Despite a rather good start and plenty of help from the people I met during my first week of field work, I was wary of the sample of my interviewees. On the one hand, following people's advice on who would be 'good for me to talk to' could ensure that I would speak to people who were considered as important and well-known players or personalities within the local and sometimes national media scene. Here it was also helpful to specifically ask the advice of Hispanic (but non-Cuban) interviewees, as they turned out to be more likely to suggest a diverse mix of future interviewees, as opposed to their 'best friend' who worked in the office next door. The snow-balling method to locate interviewees proved to be very successful. On the other hand, I was afraid of being passed around a circle of friends with a similar (political) outlook on Cuban issues and local matters in Miami and Miami's media. I therefore tried to get in touch with a number of people whose contact details had not been

given to me by previous interviewees. My efforts were rewarded in a few cases, although it turned out to be much easier if I could drop the name of a person whom I had already interviewed, someone who had recommended the person I was ‘cold-calling’ as a potential interviewee. Having a contact name when approaching a potential interviewee might be advantageous in any case, but I suspect that there is a further dimension to this in the case of Cuban-Americans.

A profound reluctance to talk to someone who is not part of the community and doing some form of investigation – be it in an academic or in a journalistic context – has grown among some members of the community. This goes hand in hand with what is perceived as an unfavourable treatment of Miami Cubans in English-language mainstream media, for example *The New York Times*. The Cuban-American community traditionally leans towards the political right and always had an ambiguous relationship with left-leaning, liberal journalists and the media they worked for. My feeling is that even academics might sometimes be seen in the same light. One interviewee also confirmed this to some extent by exclaiming: ‘They always love to picture Miami... Miami is like a magnet for all these theses: the old exile is dying. Excuse me!’ At a later stage in the interview the same research participant also asserted: ‘I have come to realize that a lot of journalists have lost their integrity when covering Cuba.’ Therefore, the Cuba coverage of these media very often put a further nail into the coffin.

### **Sensationalism, romanticised coverage and reflexivity**

These sentiments, the periodic disinclination to agree to an interview, also ties in with how easily the people in the field and their actions can be sensationalised and, at the same time, how easily the historic context can be romanticised. It is challenging to exactly put my finger on why I was worried about being culpable of one or the other (or possibly both) when doing research, thinking and writing about this particular field and the people that ‘inhabit’ it. Dealing with the Cuban exile by default means dealing with Cuba and the Cuban revolution.

And the most famous faces of the revolution are without a doubt Fidel Castro and Ernesto ‘Ché’ Guevara; especially the iconic depiction of Ché’s face has left its mark on popular culture. Apart from being conceived as charismatic leaders, Ché’s and Fidel’s fight against the Batista regime for many proves that they stood up against a corrupt establishment, formed a guerrilla movement in the *Oriente* Province and turned the power structures in Cuba upside down. Combined with a latent dose of anti-Americanism and/or anti-capitalism, one can imagine that these men, their ideas and ideology and the images they took on in the public eye helped them to achieve a legendary and maybe even mythical status well beyond their time. What is much less frequently referred to in popular culture is that the success of the Cuban revolution came at a cost. Part of that cost is the uprooting of a significant fraction of the population and the division of families, friends and ultimately a nation. With the Cold War over and Cuba being a country that is severely suffering economically, the exiles’ attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro can be viewed as somewhat bizarre if taken out of context: poisonous cigars make for a good story – but many times do not let the exiles appear in the light that they would want to be seen in and these kind of story certainly do not convey the main points a lot of exiles would want to bring across. Can I as a researcher stand outside of this discourse? Certainly not! Even reflexivity does not provide a smooth escape route:

Reflexivity may seem comfortably neutral for some. That depends how it is interpreted. In its fullest sense, reflexivity forces us to think through the consequences of our relations with others, whether it be conditions of reciprocity, asymmetry, or potential exploitation. There are choices to be made in the field, within relationships and in the final text. If we insert the ethnographer’s self as positioned subject into the text, we are obliged to confront the moral and political responsibility of our actions. (Okely 1992, 24)

For better or for worse, it is impossible for this research to not be political or at least be interpreted as a piece with a political dimension. Interviewees were as aware of this as I was, if not more so. The occasional reluctance to meet me and talk to me was therefore no surprise.

## Researching beyond the media

In addition to pursuing selected members of the community for interviews, it was also highly beneficial to attend a number of different events, such as book presentations and exhibition openings that allowed me to meet and observe people who were not necessarily directly involved with the media on a professional level.

An observation that I made regularly was that of the deep splits that run between different fragments of the community. People know each other and they are aware of who is a friend of whom, who works for whom and who is involved in certain professional, political and social networks. As I became more and more aware of this, I tried to keep my options open, hoping not to be drawn in by any particular section of the Cuban community. However, my base at the Cuban Heritage Collection might already have been taken as an indication of my supposed ideological stance by some. During my third visit to the field in October 2008, it became apparent that the staff of the Cuban Heritage Collection try very hard to keep as much of a neutral stand as possible and to not side with any particular segment of the community. This takes a balancing act extraordinaire.

To my dismay, I found myself drawn into the divisions of the community as the following incident illustrates. Once interviews were finished, some interviewees would ask whom I had interviewed previously – maybe just out of interest, maybe to go on and suggest future interviewees. I had never considered in detail what kind of reactions interviewees might have to my naming of previous contacts. Firstly, reactions had so far mostly been positive. Secondly, all interviewees had some understanding of what research entails and that I would naturally want to speak to as many people and as many ‘sides’ as possible. In one particular case, though, the interviewee showed clear disapproval of my talking to a journalist at *The Miami Herald*. At the time, I did not take this minor condemnation very seriously but in retrospect it turned out that this interviewee could have been a valuable source for further information and contacts. After this first interview, he did not respond to any further

attempts to contact him. It taught me that it is wise to hold my cards closer to my chest in such a sensitive environment.

## **Interviewing academics**

A professional group that turned out to be in some cases even more elusive than journalists was academics. Generally speaking, people were very generous with their time and the information they gave me. The staff in the Cuban Heritage Collection invited me to come along to several events and were very helpful in drawing my attention to upcoming lectures, receptions and so on. The same holds true for several researchers working in the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies where I was kindly invited to observe summer school classes on the future of Cuba. However, I also had a couple of bemusing exchanges with academics.

One professor at the University of Miami whom I had emailed to ask for an interview following a recommendation from a previous interviewee emailed back asking whether he would be assisting me in a research project and if so he would need an email from my supervisor regarding the project to ‘avoid misunderstandings and professional conflicts’. After I explained that I would like to interview him and that I would not require academic advice I never heard from him again.

Another scholar, a Cuba expert and widely published author told me that he did not want to comment on the situation in Miami. The main reason for this was that he was not an expert and not Cuban-American. Nevertheless he works at a research institute of a Miami-based university. Time constraints could be a straightforward explanation here but the sensitivity of the issues, knowing the ropes of academic research and the danger of potentially being misquoted or quoted out of context would be something that most academics would have buzzing around in the back of their mind when approached by a researcher.



## The Cuban Heritage Collection

Despite minor hiccups, it was ideal for me to be placed at the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC). During my second visit, it turned out that the staff had made plans for me too. I was asked to attend a conference the CHC was hosting and speak about my research. In the end, I could not attend this conference as I would already be back in the United Kingdom. However, I did accompany Gladys Gómez-Rossié, the community relations coordinator of the Cuban Heritage Collection, to a meeting of the Cuban- American student group, the *Federación de Estudiantes Cubanos* (FEC), based at the University of Miami. At the meeting, I was asked to introduce my project which the students seemed to meet with a mixture of curiosity and bewilderment. I suspect that they were surprised by someone coming such a long way to study something that they paid very little attention to, mainly because of its everyday omnipresence. A couple of weeks later, the president of the FEC at the time agreed to talk to me in more depth about the aims of the group and her personal views of Cuba- and Cuban-American-related issues.

Besides having a place to go to in the mornings, to have a chat, ask questions and to have internet access, the University of Miami and the CHC were also good places for me to hang out, meet and chat to people informally and observe. Arguably one of the main drawbacks when it came to being in the field were my looks, my hair colour and complexion. I do not look Cuban or Hispanic. While in the University of Miami, and more generally in the Coral Gables setting, I could practise life as what Philip Schlesinger calls ‘an experienced shrinker’ (1980, 348). Blending in was impossible in *Calle Ocho* (8<sup>th</sup> Street) and Little Havana. People probably perceived me as a tourist there – and I would always draw attention to myself. This was also the case because *Calle Ocho* has much more of a ‘street culture’. People, mostly men, stand outside cafés, sit on benches, stand in front of shops and I was frequently approached with comments and remarks when I was walking by. No hope of ‘shrinking’ there. And also it was not an environment that made me feel particularly safe and at ease.

During my second visit it became apparent that some members of the Cuban-American community had heard about me and the study. On a couple of occasions I was presented with business cards accompanied by the comment that the person would be happy to be interviewed. Although these people were usually not very high up on my own 'wish list', it was a good opportunity to get a new perspective on some matters and see others confirmed or rejected. Quite in contrast to that, I also encountered interviewees who did not actually show much of an interest in me or what exactly I was doing. Neither did they pay much attention to the questions I was asking. The interview was treated as an opportunity to put forward a political message; I was introduced to an agenda and presented with issues that bore little if any relation to my research topic.

## **Field dynamics**

Thinking along the lines of Wooffitt and Widdicombe (2006), interviews are a form of social interaction and like any other form of human social encounter, are governed by certain (unspoken) rules and dynamics. In my case, these dynamics were characterised by issues revolving around age, gender, my personal background and my personality. Given the complex nature of social interaction in general, and the added intercultural dimension in this case, it is doubtful whether the dynamics of formal and informal interviews and dealings in the field can be pinned down and analysed in their entirety. Nevertheless, in an effort at self-reflexivity, I will explore these issues in more depth.

## **Interpersonal dynamics across gender and age**

The majority of my interviewees were male and roughly between eight and forty years older than me. At times, this age gap was even verbalised in the interview. I was clearly constructed as a young female research student that 'needed to be told' certain things because it was assumed that I would not know otherwise. Drawing on Easterday et al. (1982), a number of interviews and encounters especially during the first phase of field work would fall into the 'Father-Daughter' category. In certain ways, this might have made the

interaction less awkward for the interviewee – and possibly for myself as the researcher who, in the field for the first time, had to come to terms with lingering concerns about the value, relevance and feasibility of the project and about myself as the one to carry it out: ‘Given the legitimacy of traditional sex role relationships, the father-daughter relationship offers older males – threatened by young women or unable to interact with young women as peers – a safe, predefined interactional context’ (Easterday et al. 1982, 65).

During the first phase of field research I was not too concerned about this particular dynamic during some of the interviews, as it did indeed sometimes provide me with useful information and the way the interviewee told ‘his-story’ was at the same time an indication of a point of view, a certain take on events. On the other hand, after a number of interviewees I felt information being repeated to me and I noticed that it was time to ‘dig deeper’, interrupt people if necessary and ask more refined questions which would demonstrate my existing knowledge and understanding of the issues discussed. To some extent, this meant falling out of the role that I had been given in the interviewee’s mind and let to a subtle change in the dynamics of the interview.

### **Efforts in constructing a researcher persona**

Despite my best efforts, I felt that the construction of myself as a ‘student researcher’ was also aided by the fact that I found it challenging to look professional and actively work on ‘impression management’ as for example Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, 78-88) advise in the context of doing ethnographic research or conducting interviews. Being accustomed to the climate of Central Scotland, I am not convinced I managed to fully acclimatise to high humidity, sub-tropical thunder storms and temperatures of 40 degree Celsius and above. I found it extremely difficult to keep up the construction of myself as a ‘professional’ and present myself in the way I usually do in colder climates. What made me even more conscious of this fact is that Cuban-Americans tend to be very elegant. Chronically underdressed, I frequently found myself sitting at an event, wondering if some Floridian or

Washington VIP was coming to join us, say for instance Jeb Bush, because everyone was looking so smart, men in suits and women showing off their pearls and gold. I mentioned this to a non-Cuban and was told that this is just ‘the Cuban way’. Of course this does not hold true for the entire exile community, but merely for parts of the historic exile. It would also be fair to assume that many people who attend these kinds of events not only enjoy the ‘Cuban-American content’ (book presentation; lecture; exhibition) that they entail but see it as an opportunity for a social get-together. With respect to image management, it is also worth noting that most people who can afford it will travel by car in Miami and, at least during the hot months in the summer, spend most of the day in air-conditioned rooms. The fact that I would ‘walk’ to places and use public transport, garnered me a few puzzled, bemused and at times concerned looks from interviewees and other people I met in the field. Another aspect of the on-going process of identity construction in the field was my nationality. As a significant number of people, especially among the older exiles and many Cubans who arrived after 1980, speak English as a second language, they would be aware of the fact that I obviously do not have an American accent, but not everyone would realise that I am a German national with German being my native tongue. Some of the interviewees left with the idea in mind that I am a British citizen. If they only mentioned this in passing, maybe to illustrate a point, or draw a comparison for example between their and my heritage, I would not correct them as I did not think it an issue, as long as it was clear that I am European. The fact that I was a foreigner was important because it gave contacts and interviewees a clear indication that I was not inherently leaning towards or sympathizing with any particular segment of the Cuban-American community.

A further characteristic of interviews and interactions in the field concerned language. Miami is a bi-lingual city. As one of my interviewees pointed out, insufficient Spanish-language skills can be disadvantageous to one’s professional career. I had a strong preference to conduct interviews in English. With German being my mother-tongue, I did not want to end up in a situation where I would have to translate hour-long conversations

from one foreign language into another. Apart from three interviewees, all participants were more or less happy to talk in English. For a few interviewees, this meant a true effort, with words not coming easily to them and a notable feeling of uneasiness overshadowing parts of the interview because, being well-educated and eloquent in Spanish, conversing in English was a minor struggle.

Despite feeling slightly uncomfortable and possibly too self-conscious at times, I enjoyed field work immensely. The majority of interviewees were happy to share their thoughts with me and patiently answer my questions. But like Amanda Coffey (1999, 45) I was uneasy when it came to talking about myself. While I defined the majority of my relations as mostly, though not entirely, professional, some interviewees did have a different take on this. In particular, I felt that one interviewee who after the interview started asking me personal questions about my choice as a German national to study in Scotland (hinting that it might have been for romantic reasons), clearly overstepped an invisible line, although it would have been perfectly alright from my perspective to ask him similar questions, though different in tone, within the context of the interview.

## **Evolving relations in and to the field**

A distinction between the first and second visit to Miami was the average length of interviews. In June 2006, interviews lasted around thirty minutes on average, while during my second visit half an hour never seemed enough time. This might be due to a number of reasons: for one thing, I was more familiar with the material and was able to ask more in-depth questions about the issues discussed. This in turn might have led interviewees to go into more detail and be willing to give more of their time to me. Secondly, I had probably further developed and refined my skills as an interviewer. It was also helpful that the study I was undertaking had caught some people's attention. Through word of mouth, because they had seen me working in the Cuban Heritage Collection or noticed my attendance of events with a specific Cuban-American focus, some people knew who I was and additionally were

aware of friends and/or colleagues I had interviewed previously and therefore felt being one of my interviewees would give them a chance to either underline some points or ‘set the record straight’.

Interviews and more generally interpersonal dynamics were similar between my first and second visit. During my third visit in October 2008 I observed a clear shift. One of the main reasons for that was probably my increased confidence about the feasibility of the project; I saw light at the end of the tunnel. Due to secondary sources that I had consulted and desktop research I had completed in the meantime, I felt much more certain of the historic context of the field, the exile, the main players and issues in relation to my research. As an interviewer, I was much harder to impress this time. During one interview, for instance, a (male and circa 60-year old) interviewee made a point of letting me in on ‘a little-known secret’ – namely that the two Republican Congressmen and brothers Lincoln and Mario Díaz-Balart are distant relatives of Fidel Castro. If it is a secret, it is a very open one; I had heard and read this several times before and therefore did not show the reaction the interviewee was aiming for.

While the gap between second and third visit was too broad to uphold occasional communication with most people in the field, my relations to the staff in the Cuban Heritage Collection was more open and intensive in October 2008 than it had been before. To visitors I was jokingly introduced to as ‘part of the family’. I also had many more informal and open chats with CHC employees. For the first time I felt comfortable enough to bring up more sensitive issues, questions about race, for instance, that I had wondered about but not verbalised during my previous stays.

### **Being in the field whilst writing the field**

In comparison to previous field work, I also had a much clearer understanding of what the final thesis should look like and had written drafts of a few chapters. The development of the thesis and the on-going research and writing process brought a significant change to the way

I approached the field. It made me realise the very diverse nature that fieldwork as a multi-method approach in itself can have. In June 2006 and January 2007 I had the exploratory mind-set that ‘just being in the field’ would give me the information I needed to construct my argument, or an argument rather. In October 2008 I was much more pro-active seeking specific information to fill gaps and find the missing pieces. During interview situations I caught myself on several occasions going back and forth between what was being said and how it would fit in with what I had written so far. The memory of mind-numbing transcription of hour-long interviews led me to be more assertive in bringing interviewees back on track if I felt they had gone off on a tangent. After all, I was finally able to tell the difference between track and tangent.

Despite my increased focus, I did not manage to speak to everyone I had approached for an interview. October 2008 was characterised by the presidential election campaign of Barack Obama for the Democrats and John McCain for the Republicans. Florida’s swing state status made it a major battle ground between the two sides and kept journalists very busy. Observing the presidential campaign and chatting to people in the field were insightful in other ways. Nevertheless, going to Miami shortly before Election Day on November 4<sup>th</sup> might have been one reason why it was difficult to get hold of television journalists especially. Even so, I left the field in good spirits. More than before I could see the direction in which the data and my experiences in the field were pointing.

## **Data analysis**

[T]he experience of anthropological material is, like fieldwork, a continuing and creative experience. The research has combined action and contemplation. Scrutiny of the notes offers both empirical certainty and intuitive reminders. Insights emerge also from the subconscious and from bodily memories, never penned on paper. There are serendipitous connections to be made, if the writer is open to them. Writing and analysis comprise a movement between the tangible and intangible, between the cerebral and sensual, between the visible and invisible. Interpretation moves from evidence to ideas and theory, then back again. There can be no set formulae, only broad guidelines, sensitive to specific

cases. The researcher is freed from a division of labour which splits fieldwork from analysis. The author is not alienated from the experience of participant observation, but draws upon it both precisely and amorously for the resolution of the completed text. (Okely 1994, 32)

My life not only revolved around fieldwork when I was physically in Miami, it also took over my life in Scotland. As the above quotation from Okely (1994) encapsulates, the topic and the method I had chosen stayed with me for the best part of six years. When reading the section titles of this chapter, one might get the impression that there was a clear distinction between the collection of data and the analysis and interpretation; this was not the case however. The three stages were highly intertwined, one triggered off the other and despite an ocean between myself and the field, it was in some sense always very close. Daily email feeds from *The Miami Herald* and weekly specials on news from the Americas allowed me to keep a virtual finger on the pulse. One might think that the three odd months I spent in Miami over a considerable space of time should not have had such a strong impact on my life. But through reading, online searches and research, writing, and thinking, Miami and the Cuban-American community stayed with me, whether I was there or not. My physical presence in one or the other place also interlinked with my thoughts: some things seemed perfectly clear to me when I was in the field. Yet, sitting at my desk in Scotland I could not make sense of it at all – and vice versa.

One of the most ambivalent characteristics of field research is the wealth of data that it produces. As a novice to this method, I was thrilled with the amount of material I could gather when in Miami, the vast amounts of interview material and general and participant observations I made on a daily basis. The downside became apparent when I had made my way back to Scotland and was trying to find a sensible way to proceed.

After my first time in the field in June 2006, I transcribed in full all fifteen interviews I had conducted and also copied all the field notes I had taken. I then went through these roughly 70 (single-spaced) pages of data, labelled, categorized and looked for re-occurring themes;



issues that were mentioned again and again by interviewees. Naturally these themes might have come up because of my questioning during the interview. But, as already indicated above, I had made a point of conducting these semi-structured interviews in a very open manner, allowing plenty of time for interviewees to expand on their views, even if I felt during the time of interviewing that this might be more of a side-track than relevant data in regard to my research questions. This also ties in with the role of the student researcher I felt I was ascribed by a number of interviewees during my first visit to the field.

In total, I identified seven themes that deserved further scrutiny in future field, archival and desktop research. The themes were

- The Development of a Spanish-language Media Scene
- Diversity of the Cuban-American Community and the Notion of Exile
- The Cuban-Americans within the Hispanic Community
- The Development of Miami as an Urban, Prospering Centre
- The Relationship between the Cuban-American and the local (white) Anglo community and the Case of Elián
- The Misuse of Cuban Issues and Raising False Hopes
- Academics, Intellectuals and the Question of Succession in Cuba

Some of these early themes materialised in one or several chapters later on. Some formed background issues that went beyond the scope of this work but were still highly useful for my general understanding of the history and the concerns of the Cuban-American community.

## **Concluding remarks**

In his ambitiously titled *Getting the Most out of the Research Experience. What Every Researcher Needs to Know*, Brian Roberts characterises good research in the following way:

Good research is a thinking person's game. It is a creative and strategic process that involves constantly assessing, reassessing, and making decisions about the best possible means for obtaining trustworthy information, carrying out appropriate analysis, and drawing credible conclusions. (2007, 72)

Given the post-positivist and exploratory nature of this project I sometimes wondered if this research would have taken a different direction had I spoken to more (or fewer) people, or even if I had spoken and met the same people in a different order or at a different time of year. After my second visit to the field, I was concerned that the data I had was too patchy to derive general indications about the nature of Spanish-language media in Miami and their relation to the Cuban-American community. Fieldwork as a multi-method approach produces a lot of data to take in, analyse and interpret. What it does not give the researcher is a clear-cut story. What one observes first-hand in the field might be poles apart from what interviewees say. Once I understood how some things 'worked' within the community and the relationship between the media and community, new questions would arise, new developments were to be taken into account. The engagement with the field on so many levels makes it challenging to draw the line and especially in the beginning to tell apart the essential and the useful from the interesting but less relevant information.

A further constraint was that the field I was trying to research was not as clearly defined for the outside world as it was in my mind. This goes back to a point made earlier about the Cuban and Cuban-American identity and constructions and negotiation thereof being intertwined with other loyalties, groups, and communities that an individual forms part of. I was especially aware of this when talking to younger people in their twenties and thirties and people who came to the U.S. at a relatively young age, for example the *Pedro Pan* children, who had undergone a significant amount of their education in the United States. How prevalent were Cuban issues and topics in their everyday life if it was not for some doctoral researcher asking them about it? My presence in the field simultaneously changed it. No matter how I phrased questions, it influenced the interviewee. This made the combination of methods even more important.

My third visit to the field was not only indispensable in filling gaps where previous data had fallen short, but in many ways also confirmed that the information I had collected and the preliminary interpretations and conclusions I had drawn were on track. I knew more than I thought I did. On occasion, I would find myself reminding people of a journalist's name they could not recall. In addition, when given a suggestion of potential interviewees, I found that I had spoken to some of them already. Certainly there were others that it would have been beneficial to speak to, but restriction in terms of time would not allow it.

A major drawback of conducting fieldwork is that it is time and cost-intensive. Compared to many European and other American cities, Miami is not a cheap place to live and my work as a teaching fellow did not allow me to stay as long as I would have liked. But even longer periods of time in the field would not have been a guarantee to get interviews with all the people I would have liked to talk to and observe everything I would have liked to see. This rings especially true in relation to Radio and TV Martí, on which I was trying to gather more data. Even though I did interview several people working for the Martí's, some were rather reluctant to answer any question in relation to their work or their personal opinion in any depth. After *The Miami Herald* ran several stories claiming that journalists working for independent (i.e. commercial) media were receiving government funds through their work for the Martí's which would ultimately hamper their impartiality, the topic became too sensitive for most people to comment on. Notwithstanding my efforts, I never got an interview or even heard back from Radio and TV Martí, despite handing in my questions in advance.

Physical disengagement with the field was in many ways straightforward. The end of my relationship to individuals in the field was determined in most cases by my departure. I remained in sporadic contact with Donn Tilson of the University of Miami and Esperanza de Varona of the Cuban Heritage Collection. Considerable geographical distance and cultural differences have had an influence on the entire research and writing process that should not be underestimated. When explaining about the research project and the fact that it is based at

a British institution, some interviewees seemed rather relieved and more at ease. As outlined above though, mental disengagement with the field was much more difficult and the engagement itself would vary in intensity depending on other things going on in my life. I sometimes thought of myself as doing ‘ethnography from a distance’.

Something that I had in common with the exiles was that my interest would not just stay within the realms of Miami and South Florida but also move across the Straits to Cuba. If Fidel Castro or anything Cuba-related was on the news I would be glued to the television. My family and friends made an effort of passing on articles they saw about Cuba and Miami. Funnily enough, some people even assumed given the research topic I would have a strong interest and be an expert on *Scarface* and *CSI Miami*.

I quoted Amanda Coffey at the beginning of this chapter and I would like to end with another citation from her monograph, *The Ethnographic Self*:

The construction and production of self and identity occurs both during and after fieldwork. In writing, remembering and representing our fieldwork experiences we are involved in processes of self presentation and identity construction. In considering and exploring the intimate relations between the field, significant others and the private self, we are able to understand the processes of fieldwork as practical, intellectual and emotional accomplishments. (1999, 1)

Owing to its time-extensive dimension, fieldwork and the preparation of data, analysis, reliving memories and so on, goes through ups and downs. However, one of the most positive side-effects of doing ethnographic work is that it gives the researcher the opportunity to not only get to know a new context with new people but that it also gives one the chance of getting to know oneself better – and hopefully come out at the other end with a sense of achievement.

The above chapter has provided a detailed account of the methodology chosen for this project. The exploratory mind-set to the field and informants as well as the fact that research was carried out beyond the explicit realms of the media and those who work in them have

made this a non-mediacentric approach to research. In contrast to previous case studies on media and projects focussing on other aspects of the Cuban-American community, this research offers an etic account, a fact that was significant also to informants encountered in the field.

The following chapter moves on to considerations of Miami as a place and social space.

### 3. Place and Space: Miami – Havana USA?

#### Introduction

This chapter explores how Miami has developed as a place. It also considers how it has evolved as a social space and how both place and space have been influenced by incoming migrants, in particular those emigrating from Cuba. After reflecting on some theoretical notions with regards to space, place, time and memory, the development of Miami and its Cuban-American connection shall be considered. Experiences of the early exile community are illustrated through reference to the blockbuster *The Lost City* (2005), starring and directed by Cuban-American Andy García. The final section of this chapter explores community relations in Miami.

#### Notions of place, space and memory

In the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Miami experienced a fast-paced evolution in terms of its spatial, cultural, economic, social and political dimensions. In itself, one might argue, this is not a note-worthy phenomenon. What differentiates Miami from other U.S. cities that have undergone considerable growth in the past century is its unique location in relation to the Caribbean and to Central and South America and the role that one group of migrants, the Cubans,<sup>15</sup> have played in shaping the development of the city. A well-known joke in South Florida is that Miami is the closest city to the United States. People have certain expectations when visiting or living in an American city and in a number of ways, Miami does not align with these characteristics.

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<sup>15</sup> The majority of Cubans arriving in the United States were and still are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship. They therefore technically become ‘Cuban-Americans,’ although how they interpret and identify with this legal status is a highly subjective matter.

## The choice of place

Drawing on Harvey (1989), Urry (1995, 23) points towards the paradox which characterises choices of place in the post-modern era; due to ready access to electronic media, communication, production and consumption technologies, place – our physical presence in a certain *locus* – becomes less important. On the other hand however, the sensitivity to variations of places increases. In varying degrees, it matters to us on a subjective level where we are and what being in that place feels like, the impact the place has on our daily life and our options regarding (free-time and professional) activities.

For Cuban migrants, the choice of place is simultaneously coined as a demonstration of a political stance. Some purposefully stayed in Miami or the South Florida area to send a statement back to the island. They were waiting on Fidel Castro's doorstep for things to change, peacefully or otherwise. Others, Cuban-Americans wanting to express their dismay at the hardliners, their adamant arguments for the trade embargo and the no-dialogue policy, would make a point of moving to another city within the United States or elsewhere.

One interviewee who was initially involved with the counter-revolutionary group *Movimiento Contra-Revolucionario del Pueblo* (MRP) in the early 1960s confirmed this notion: 'I told them I'm leaving Miami. I think it is a madhouse and we are making it worse and I don't think we are going to do anything good for Cuba here.' Similar sentiments are expressed by Román de la Campa:

As dissidence and a rejection of the 1950s spread throughout American cities and universities, Miami withdrew into a shell, scandalized, embittered, and at times violent. I felt that it had nothing to say to me. At some point I began to refuse to participate in ritualistic Castro-bashing, and when I returned to Miami with my family during the summer, I opted to stay in dinky Miami Beach hotels that were filled with Latin Americans rather than with my Miami relatives. There was only one place to go after that, even if it broke my parents' heart. They had risked everything to take me out of Cuba, but I could think only about going back. (2000, 69)

The above quote hints towards the fact that the main entity which defined, influenced and inspired Cuban Miami, in particular Little Havana and *Calle Ocho* (8<sup>th</sup> Street), would always be Cuba itself. This resonates with Doreen Massey's insightful contemplations in *For Space*. She proposes that space is 'the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny'. She secondly suggests that we 'understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; [...] as the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity' (2005, 9). Massey's third characteristic of space is that it is 'always under construction' (2005, 9). These highly interrelated characteristics of space hold true in the case of Miami. In terms of interrelations between places, Havana is of particular significance.

The Cuban capital, paid tribute to in many literary works as well as the recent blockbuster *The Lost City* (2005), has served as a model and constant inspiration when it came to the creation and negotiation, or continuous 'construction' to use Doreen Massey's (2005) term, of Cuban Miami. After all, the area in question is also referred to as Little Havana and not Little Cuba. Even though de la Campa eventually learned to detest the frequent family trips to Miami, they were a way to get closer to Cuba; '[I]n time it felt as if it was Cuba itself' (2000, 62).

## **Social and spatial aspects of remembering**

It has been argued that significant markers within a landscape, a town, or a city form part of the identification process and identify formation (Urry 1995, Smith 1986, Carter et al. 1993, Ballinger 2003); the negative image of this can be seen in the iconic absence of the World Trade Centre in New York City after the 9/11 attacks and the creation of Ground Zero.<sup>16</sup> In the early years after the revolution, Miami developed certain features and landmarks that were inspired by and at the same time a constant reminder of what was lost in Cuba. An

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<sup>16</sup> As Sturken (2008) suggests, absence or emptiness does not stand for a void in terms of meaning, memories and interpretation. On the contrary, it gives room to (new) negotiations and exploitation of political agendas which are in themselves set in a contingent field or a context.



example of this is *Calle Ocho* with its Máximo Gómez Park, Cuba and José Martí monuments.<sup>17</sup> The *Calle Ocho* area pays tribute to a lost homeland. It also bears witness to the failed attempts of overthrowing Fidel Castro and his allies and those who suffered and died in the process. It holds the memories and unfulfilled dreams of those who were never able to return to the island.

When covering the Cuban-American community, reporters make sure to go to the Versailles Restaurant or the Máximo Gómez Park to capture the mood and opinion of members of the community. Little Havana is an essential tessera in the mosaic that feeds the memories of the Cuban community not based on the island, i.e. people of Cuban descent now living in the United States or other parts of the world. It is also renowned for its meeting places for those who want to further delve into the social construction of memory, history and political discourses. Maurice Halbwachs, in his seminal *On Collective Memory*, asserts that memory is a key agent in the continuous process of identity formation, of establishing who we are:

We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated. (1992, 47)

Halbwachs illustrates how collective memory is socially constructed. We need others to remember with us, but collective memory would not exist if it were not for the individual memory of each group member. There is a reciprocal relationship between the individual's memory and the group's collective memory:

One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories. (Halbwachs 1992, 40)

Halbwachs argues that we need others to 'keep track' of the past, to make sense of it and give it meaning. It is only through getting together with others, our collaborators in memory, so to speak, that collective memory is created and maintained. The discourse of the group

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<sup>17</sup> The significance of these places for older Cuban-Americans is captured in a humorous yet heart-rending short story by Miami-based author Ana Menéndez (2001) entitled 'In Cuba I was a German Shepherd'.

provides a framework for the way in which a group remembers the past: ‘No memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections’ (Halbwachs, 1992, 43). The past is therefore constructed through the present and, although memories are naturally based within an individual, they are kept alive and relived through social interaction in the present.

In addition to the social aspect of remembering, Kuhn, drawing on Edward Casey (1987), emphasises the importance of places in memory work. Places situate memory; they serve as triggers or mnemonic pointers. Memory itself can be seen as ‘a *topos* in its own right: it is a place we revisit, or to which we are transported’ (Kuhn 1992, 16-17). In addition, and perhaps paradoxically, the process of forgetting is just as significant within a community as remembering. What often seems to be forgotten in Miami is remembered in Cuba. And sometimes the same things are remembered but from a different perspective. The writings and poetry of José Martí are brought into play by Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straits, each utilizing Martí’s thoughts to support their line of argument. A recent example for this on the Cuban-American side is the recitation of a selection from *Simple Verses* (*Versos Sencillos*) during the last scenes of *The Lost City* (2005).

## **The city – embedded in national structures**

Exilic and diasporic groups have often been shown to have a strong connection to the wider transnational community. Previous studies by Kolar-Panov (1997), Georgiou (2006) and Naficy (1993) have demonstrated viable links between diasporic groups based in different places all over the globe. As outlined in greater detail in chapter 1, this leads Georgiou to suggest that the nation-state embodies a ‘disruption or restriction’ (2006, 9) for diasporic communities when moving from the local to the global sphere. The city with its cosmopolitan elements is seen to stand outside of or reach beyond the (nation-)state. However, this is a somewhat partial and highly contextualised view. Even though Miami with a dominant Hispanic demographic has experienced a constant flow of incoming

migrants, the city is still firmly based within the state and federal system of the United States. From a socio-cultural perspective, there are arguably transnational traits, especially when it comes to fine arts, music and literature. Cuban-Americans certainly entertain transnational network to other Cuban exiles based elsewhere. However, politics and policies, for example legislation on immigration, play too vital a role for many migrants based or coming to Miami to overlook or neglect the importance of the (nation-)state. One main reason for many to come in the first place is the political and/or economic failure of the (nation-)state that used to be their home.

Going further along this line of thought, Silvio Waisbord and Nancy Morris make the point that states

control the processes and mechanisms of formal citizenship and the movement of people across borders. Mobility of capital and goods, ideas and images, does characterize the current global era, but citizenship, contingent on the lottery of birth, continues to be tied to states. Unprecedented numbers of migrants, refugees, and tourists daily cross political boundaries but states still monopolize the privilege of citizenship rights. (2001, xii-xiii)

With regard to the specific situation in Miami, several interviewees made the point that Latin American business people like to come to settle deals in Miami because of the legal reliability and the stable political climate the United States can offer. One interviewee phrased it in the following way:

This is a very international city and its livelihood depends on us being an international city but it is also very important that we geographically belong to the United States. People take pride in coming here and doing business in the United States. There is a certain level of formality here that you do not necessarily have in other places. (Interviewee, June 2006)

The dichotomy between city and state may well exist in certain areas of life, but in the realms of the economic and the political it is not evident in this case study.

Almost since the first arrivals from Cuba in 1959, the U.S. government assigned the Cubans a special status and despite unfulfilled promises during (presidential) election runs, local,

regional and national politicians have continuously tried to win over the Cuban-American community. After it became apparent that there was not going to be a swift return to the island, there was a growing willingness to engage in U.S. politics, get to the power centres and influence decision makers. This process culminated in the formation of the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF). The work and influence of the CANF is examined in greater detail in the next chapter on Spanish- and English language newspapers in Miami. Moving on from the spatial contemplations of this section, the following paragraphs consider individual and communal exilic experiences.

## **The exilic experience**

Expanding on notions of place and the exilic state, Naficy (1993) suggests that exiles have more in common with exiles in other locations than with ‘non-exiles’ living next door to them. The decisive factor for commonality in this case is therefore not physical place and a shared environment but the state of liminality and in-betweenness described as emblematic of the exilic experience. While Naficy’s (1993) claims might resonate well on a conceptual level, it remains unclear whether these suggested commonalities are recognised as such by exiles themselves. As alluded to in chapter 1, the exilic experience is strongly influenced by circumstances of the host society.

Naficy’s (1993) assertion does not apply in its entirety to Cubans and Cuban-Americans based in Miami and deserves a more detailed analysis. For some, even second and third generation Cuban-Americans, the exilic experience, the waiting on Fidel Castro’s doorstep and life in Miami, the centre of the exile community forms a very strong and decisive part of their identity and their purpose. Others, however, again a cross-section of first, second and third generation Cubans, are not actively engaged in the exilic experience, i.e. avoiding conversations about politics, involvement in exile organisation or any organisation that is dominated by Cubans and Cuban-Americans for that matter. Some of the interviewees pointed out that they draw a clear distinction in their mind between those exiles who came

for political reasons and those migrants who were mainly economically motivated. One interviewee made the point of saying that the reason why Cubans get on well with Nicaraguans and Salvadorians are similar experiences of political exile. Common circumstances that caused the exilic experience were therefore perceived as having more of a bonding potential than coming from the same country of origin.<sup>18</sup> In the case of the Cuban-American community in Miami then, the individual exilic experience can be a bonding quality between individuals with different migratory backgrounds. Every migrant experiences varying degrees of liminality and in-betweeness. However, the ‘true’ Cuban exile is a political migrant. There is an evaluation of voices taking place in Miami. While the exilic experience might be a shared one in principle, it is much easier to have your voice heard and express the pain and contemplations around liminality if it is expressed by taking political action or at least by demanding and talking politics and policies.

## **Feelings of guilt and questions of Cuban unity**

The exilic experience is of course highly complex. But there are two aspects that often became prevalent during more profound conversations in the field. One was the notion of guilt, the other – related to the first – was the concern of how to relate to Cubans on the island. A feeling of guilt sometimes grasps exiles in Miami; this might especially, but not exclusively, hold true for first generation exiles, those who left family members and friends behind. They live (or lived) with the knowledge of being in a better place – at least from a material, civil and human rights’ point of view. Nevertheless, material comfort and success should not be taken as sole indicators of happiness and contentment. To be aware of the hardship that others had to endure, to receive messages from loved ones who in a worst case scenario were imprisoned is extremely challenging to cope with on a day to day basis,

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<sup>18</sup> Generally, it can be assumed that people leave for a combination of reasons ranging across the political, the economic and the personal. However, in the case of the historic exiles the main reason for going into exile was Fidel Castro’s policies and the fear of what the future would hold for Cuba politically. In contrast to that, Cubans who came during the time of the Mariel boatlift in 1980 were largely perceived as economic refugees who had a stronger focus on building a life in the United States. A future return to the island was rarely part of the plan.

especially with very little information coming through. Even though the trade embargo still finds a great deal of support within the Cuban-American community, the price people pay on a personal level is high. The awareness that Cubans on the island lack basic goods while having such a rich country, and its natural trading partner, as its northern neighbour, is heart-breaking for some exiles.

Fidel Castro has used the trade embargo to blame the struggling state of Cuba's economy on U.S. policies. Whether this holds true or not would go beyond the realm of this project.<sup>19</sup> However, it demonstrates the entanglement between guilt and the relation between Cubans on the island and the Cuban-American community in Miami. Over the years, the relationship became more and more challenging and multi-faceted. When attending an undergraduate class on Cuba's future at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami, I noted that the lecturer, criticised the terminology of 'us' and 'them', i.e. Cuban-Americans in Miami versus Cubans on the island, in the essays that he had marked the night before class. However, my observation was that this kind of rhetoric was also ubiquitous in class, including contributions made by the academic and the guest speaker.

Later, a conversation on this topic was triggered by my own national background. Even though the German Reunification of 1990 was euphorically celebrated by Germans and people all over the world alike, it became apparent that a sense of being *one* country and of forming *one* people takes years, even decades to develop – and for some it might never come.<sup>20</sup> Similar concerns were shared about re-uniting the exile with Cubans on the island by one informant:

My personal opinion is that there is a large group of Cuban-Americans who privately, if the moment comes when these guys [the Castro brothers and their

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<sup>19</sup> For recent discussions of the trade embargo see for example *The Cuban Embargo* by Haney and Vanderbush (2005) and *Cuban Exiles on the Trade Embargo: Interviews* by Edward J. González (2007).

<sup>20</sup> Even in 2010, twenty years after the reunion, the categories of 'Ossis' (people from the former German Democratic Republic) and the 'Wessis' (those from the Federal Republic of Germany) are still prevalent in popular discourse and German minds and hearts.

supporters] are no longer in power... we do not want these people to come here. We don't. Because... [...] same music – but to different words, same food – but here at least we have the spices to make it taste good. Same language – yet the way we call each other and interpret things is a bit different. Very different values and attitudes, very, very different values and attitudes... We did a study a couple of years ago [...] about the values and attitudes of recently arrived Cubans which said to us that we are almost two countries now in terms of who we are and how we think. Can that be changed overnight? I do not think so. (Interviewee, June 2006)

Echoing the above statement by an informant, there is a feeling of resignation in the Cuban-American community. The Castro brothers have won merely by hanging onto power for such a long time. Some younger Cuban-Americans (see chapter 7) have realised that exile organisations should take into account that Cuban-Americans based in Miami actually know very little about everyday life in Cuba and a connection between Cuba and its exile community might not come as naturally as many would like to think. Cuban-Americans look back on a different history than Cubans who remained on the island. The myth of the historic exiles is one example of this.

## **The myth of the historic exiles**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Miami hardly resembled the metropolitan area with its strong business ties to the southern hemisphere that it is today. The city and the county it forms part of, Miami-Dade, have experienced a major demographic change, particularly in the second half of the last century.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there had been a lively exchange between Cuba and the south of Florida in terms of trade, labour, art and education. Cuba's wealthy were welcome tourists in Miami. However, the Cuban revolution under Fidel Castro brought a new dimension to the migration between the Caribbean island and its northern neighbour. What followed Castro's takeover of Havana in 1959 was the exodus of the higher and middle-classes (García 1996). The early migrants were mostly well-educated white professionals who initially held the firm belief that they would return to Cuba within

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<sup>21</sup> For an extensive analysis of the city's transformation in relation to migration waves and demographic changes, see Portes and Stepick (1993).

the coming two or three years. After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, it became obvious that a swift return might not be realistic after all.

Practical matters of needing something to live on, having to support oneself and the family in the new country meant that the Cubans had to arrange themselves with residing in the United States for the time being. They had to create a place for themselves. This led to the accelerated expansion of Miami. Initially, this expansion was mainly spatial; the geographical area of the city grew. Over the years, however, the incoming Cuban migrants also made a very strong contribution to the commercial life of the city.<sup>22</sup> The historic exiles certainly had something to offer: they were well-educated, hard-working, entrepreneurial and used to success. They had left behind a standard of living that they were keen to achieve on a similar scale on the other side of the Florida Straits. The construction of the exodus and the establishment of the first wave of migrants after 1959 have developed into a myth<sup>23</sup> within the Cuban-American community and possibly the wider Hispanic community.

In the field, Cuban-Americans of the second and third generation often referred to the positive characteristics of their parents and grand-parents without a flicker of hesitation. They also repeatedly assumed the same positive qualities for themselves. Whilst in retrospect living their own myth, the historic exiles were in fact living another one simultaneously: the myth of the American Dream, an accelerated one to be precise, going from ‘rags to riches’ within a matter of years. Several interviewees emphasised the hardship and the willingness to succeed and earn a living.

The Cubans that came [...] from 1959 [onwards], used to come, of course, with a small bag. It was the only thing that they were permitted to bring. They did not permit to bring nothing at that time. If you were a professional you could not bring the diploma with you at all. No! No! No money at all– you could only have a dime to call when you arrive here [for] someone to pick you up at the airport or

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<sup>22</sup> Between 1950 and 1987 the number of ‘economically active population’ in the Metropolitan Miami rose from 157,321 to 712,568. The number of business establishments went up from 14,894 to 58,036 (Portes and Stepick 1993, 209)

<sup>23</sup> The term myth is here referred to as set out by Segal (2004). Myths are broadly defined as stories with a significant function.



something like that. And then, it was a very, you know,... All the Cubans that came at the time were really Cuban middle class and also high class. But [they] came with nothing at all. And they had to work whatever, whatever. They used to go to Homestead [a smaller city in Miami-Dade], to work, just lawyers, physicians, all professionals, working whatever. With *The Miami Herald*, just distributing the newspaper. (Interviewee, June 2006)

The initial hardship paid off in the long run. Naturally, these kinds of tales make welcome material for Hollywood.

### ***The Lost City* – fictitious reality made in Hollywood**

The myth of the historic exiles is also alluded to in *The Lost City* (2005), which was directed by Andy García and written by Cuban novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante.<sup>24</sup> Set in Havana in 1958 and 1959, the main character, Fico Fellove (played by Andy García), owner of one of Havana's legendary music nightclubs, *El Tropicano*, refuses to play along with the new forces in power after the downfall of the Batista-regime. Leaving his parents, his nightclub and the love of his life behind, the viewer observes Fico board a plane at Havana Airport. Fico goes to New York City where he starts working as a dishwasher. After some time he gets to play the piano in the bar, now working two jobs simultaneously. One night, the infamous Meyer Lansky<sup>25</sup> (played by Dustin Hoffman), former head of the Havana Mob, comes into the bar to meet Fico and once again offers him a deal. Fico had declined to work with Meyer Lansky in Havana but appears to be happy to make a deal with him now, as Fico's *El Tropicano* – New York opens fifteen months after the meeting to a sell-out crowd. In *The Lost City* (2005), Fico has managed to establish himself as a club owner in the U.S. in approximately two years after his arrival.

Fico Fellove's story is fictitious, some might say an idealised and forgiving tale – yet it resounds with the biography of many Cuban-Americans. The pavilion of the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami is named after Robert C. Goizueta, who made

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<sup>24</sup> Infante was initially a supporter of Fidel Castro and his reforms but then fell out with him. He eventually went into exile in London. Infante is most famous for the highly acclaimed *Tres Tristes Tigres* (first published in 1967; translated into: *Three Trapped Tigers* (2008)).

<sup>25</sup> For an in-depth account of Havana's night life and its underground scene in the 1950s see T.J. English's (2007) *The Havana Mob*.

generous donations to the Collection. The commemorative plaque which summarises his life reads:

Robert C. Goizueta  
November 18, 1931 – October 18, 1997

Robert C. Goizueta was born in Cuba in 1931. He attended Colegio de Belén and later Cheshire Academy where he learned English. Majoring in chemical engineering he graduated from Yale University in 1953. The following year on July 4<sup>th</sup>, The Coca-Cola Company in Cuba hired him as a chemist. In 1960, after the Communists assumed power in Cuba and nationalized businesses, he made a fateful decision. Roberto, his wife Olguita and their children left Cuba for Miami. This experience changed his life and his outlook forever.

A Cuban emigrant seeking freedom, Roberto C. Goizueta personified the *classic* American dream. Within 30 years of leaving Cuba, he was leading an American company that symbolized freedom around the world – The Coca-Cola Company. Throughout his career the creation of value for the company's share owners was his passion. During his 16 years as chairman and chief executive officer, the Company's value increased from \$ 4 billion to \$ 145 billion. Upon his death, Fortune Magazine named The Coca-Cola Company "America's Most Admired Corporation" for a second consecutive year.

Robert C. Goizueta was more than a business leader. He was the ideal citizen who believed that every person who enjoys freedom and opportunity has a duty to cherish, protect and nurture it. He strived to make America stronger, not only through his inspirational and exceptional business leadership, but also through his generous educational and philanthropic contributions.

This community, this nation and our world have been deeply influenced by the life, mission and presence of Robert C. Goizueta.

Mr. Goizueta was exceptionally successful, though this type of story on a smaller scale was a familiar one to the historic exiles.

*The Lost City* attempts to capture the beauty of Havana, a city lost by the exiles together with the exciting, flamboyant activities, the cultural heritage and the architectural beauty it is remembered for. Havana is likened to a rose: 'It has petals and it has thorns. So it depends on how you grab it. But in the end it always grabs you' (Fico in *The Lost City*). Andy García, who was born in Havana but left the country as an infant, is living proof (among many others) of the 'very strong sense of Cuban nationalism through combination of nostalgia and refusal' (de la Campa 2000, 9) that is bred in Miami. Another well-known Cuban-American

of the same inkling is Gloria Estefan: '[t]heir [Estefan's and García's] Miami is a community built on the premises that Cuba's prerevolutionary memories are all that matter as far as the nation is concerned, and that they are best kept and reproduced in southern Florida' (de la Campa 2000, 9).

The economic success of the Cuban-American community stands in stark opposition to the political inertia of the situation. The fact that all the organisations, funds, and lobby groups were in the end not able to change the status quo on the island causes immense frustrations among some segments of the community. There is a sense of having achieved everything – apart from the one thing that is closest to their hearts. The Castro brothers seem to have won merely due to their continuous existence in the places of power. And just when it looked like the Cuban government was finally going to give in due to the downfall of the Soviet Union, new allies in Latin America and the Far East appear. Seeing Fidel Castro die would be interpreted as a victory in this involuntary waiting game, even though his death might not change much in the end.

Regrettably, the circumstances have in part resulted in alienation between the exile community and Cubans on the island. Much time and effort is spent in Miami in considering the role of Cuban-Americans in a free Cuba whilst careful thinkers send out reminders that this process is not about claiming back what was taken away by the government decades ago. Neither is it about taking over and setting things right. Even though the willingness to help and support might be there, history and time spent apart have made this a complex relationship.

## **Community relations in Miami**

In Miami, Cuban migrants formed the nucleus of a growing Hispanic community. With several Latin American countries facing political turbulence over the past decades, more and more people settled in Miami as political and/or economic refugees. It allowed them to work

for Spanish-language employers who were rather tolerant with regard to their English-language skills.<sup>26</sup> It is still the case today that recent migrants can get around the city and conduct their everyday business without having to master basic English.

Although the changing demographics meant growth and prosperity for Miami in the economic and cultural realms, communities which had settled in Miami-Dade before the Cuban revolution, the Anglo and the African-American communities, found it a challenge to accept their new neighbours, some of whom were living the American dream without even having to learn English. When it came to finding a job, white employers would often prefer (white) Cubans (Portes and Stepick 1993, 12 and 14). African-Americans faced a form of double discrimination – by the Anglos and by the Cubans – which led to poor community relations. To some extent, these sentiments are still manifesting today. One Cuban-American scholar summarised the relationship between the Cuban-American and the African-American community:

There was a lot of resentment among the Black community when the Cubans started arriving because they displaced the Blacks from a lot of jobs. If an owner had a gas station and had a Black pumping gas he preferred a white Cuban who had probably been a lawyer or a physician or somebody like that and gave him the job than a Black. All the bartenders in South Beach...So the Blacks were replaced and that caused a lot of tension in the community. That has subsided over the years. I think that there is a latent hostility still there that exists. (Interviewee, June 2006)

At the early development stages of the Cuban exile, relations between the Anglo and the Cuban community were promising. Both sides believed that there would be a fast return to the island. It is also worth noting in this context that, unlike other Hispanic groups, the Cubans had a special status in terms of immigration. They were not considered immigrants, but exiles with Cuba being at an unsettled political stage and the Cuban Missile Crisis of

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<sup>26</sup> Difficulties with the English language are still common today, indicating that later migration waves also lived/live with a language barrier. According to a survey conducted by Jessica Lavariega Monforti and Lisa García Bedolla (2006) entitled 'Social Context and Exile Politics: A Look at Cuban & Cuban-American Political Attitudes', only twenty-eight percent out of a random sample of 600 adult Cubans and Cuban-Americans say they speak English 'very well'.

1962 turning the island into one of the main fronts of the Cold War. However, these initially positive sentiments came to an abrupt hold with the 1980 Mariel Boatlift.<sup>27</sup> Mariel changed the image of the Cuban-American community on a local and on a national scale; it had negative impact on the image of Miami as a place. The arrival of about 124,000 people in the space of few months caused upheaval. Due to Fidel Castro's political shrewdness the admission of regular Cuban citizens, most of them with family based in Florida already, also meant the influx of so-called anti-socials. By November of 1980, approximately 1.4 percent had been arrested and were detained (García 1996, 71). Mariel had long-lasting effects on community relations. Members of the Anglo community started to leave the city and to settle in the north of Florida.

A more recent severe fracture in relations between the Anglo and the Cuban-American community was caused by the case of Elián González, a young boy who together with his mother undertook to cross the Florida Straits on a make-shift raft. His mother died in the attempt to reach U.S. shores, however, Elián survived and was awaited by distant paternal relatives based in Miami. The mêlée surrounding the child received international media attention (see chapter 6 for an in-depth analysis of television output and the Elián-saga), partly because even the U.S. president at the time, Bill Clinton, got involved. For a large segment of the Cuban-American community, Elián was more than a boy whom they did not want to grow up in Fidel's Cuba. He was constructed as a religious symbol (see de la Torre 2003). From an atheist point of view, his return to the island would signify yet another victory by Fidel Castro.

Not everyone who wanted Elián to stay is likely to have experienced life in Cuba after 1959. Similar to the development of Cuban long-distance nationalism in Miami, the first-hand experience of what life on the island is like is available only to some. Others understand

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<sup>27</sup> The Mariel Boatlift is named after the Port of Mariel, west of Havana. Due to turbulences in Havana (see Portes and Stepick 1993, 18 - 37; García 1996, 46 – 80; Bardach 2002, 118 and 129 for detailed description and analysis), Castro invited Cuban exiles in Miami to come and collect members of their family who wanted to leave the country.

Cuba by proxy, passed on through collectively mediated memories and further information available in the public sphere. Nevertheless, wanting Elián to stay seemed a uniting goal for large parts of the community. A number of interviewees even went so far as to distinguish community relations in terms of pre- and post-Elián:

I think that we have to look at it pre-Elián and after Elián. Pre-Elián, there was a significant belief among the Cuban community that they were accepted, that they were part of the community and so on. Elián was a reality check in which they saw that Americans see things very differently than Cuban-Americans. The Cubans wanted to keep Elián, the Americans wanted to send him back. There was a disconnect and many people realised that the perception that the media provided of the Cuban community – conservative, wealthy, Mafia, [intransigent – there is a stereotype the media] gave to the Cuban-American community that alienated the Cuban-American community and made them think ‘Well, we are really foreigners here. We are not really part of mainstream America.’ So I think that there is an alienation that has taken place in the past few years among the Cuban-American community, from the Anglo-American community. (Interviewee, June 2006)

In comparison, Cuban-American relations to other subgroups coming together under the Hispanic umbrella have been uneventful. The statements received from interviewees when questioned about this issue is more than in other cases influenced by their personal experience and perception as there is very little public debate on these matters. Nevertheless, one notion that was repeatedly highlighted was that Cubans had a rather high opinion of themselves, their achievements and their heritage. Non-Cuban Hispanic interviewees confirmed that it can be demanding to deal with and interact with the community in Miami:

In general, many people find that the Cubans... Their numbers are so overwhelming. It's difficult. Not that you want to fight them but you can't melt into it exactly because you are not of that experience. It also creates its challenges. (Interviewee, June 2006)

On the other hand, the strong Spanish-language community that grew around the Cuban nucleus can be an exhilarating and liberating experience as a non-Cuban Hispanic female informant describes upon her experience of coming to live in Miami:

It was the first time that I was really immersed in a Latin community and I embraced it, I mean I loved it. I loved the fact that you come to Miami and everybody speaks Spanish, you know. When I was a child I remember my dad

saying ‘Keep it down, don’t speak in Spanish in public because people look at you.’ (Interviewee, October 2008)

Despite the decreasing numbers of the early Cuban migrants, the exilic experience is still a decisive factor for a Cuban-American collective identity. This is made explicit to other Spanish-speaking groups in the city. It is associated also with a political attitude that is not matched by other Hispanic groups, for example Mexican-Americans:

Cubans, for whatever reason... Well, Cubans still have the Cuba-syndrome about Cuba. The Mexican-Americans that come they don’t want to be Mexicans, they want to be Americans, they want to make money and so on. So, the Cubans and Mexicans do not mix very well. Not because there is tension but because they have different views of the world. Mexican-Americans are probably more Democratic, Cuban-Americans are more Republican and conservative. That divides Cubans and Mexicans. (Interviewee, June 2006)

Another distinguishing factor between Cubans and other Hispanics is the issue of immigration. Immigration laws are crucial for most Hispanics, a fact well-reflected by Spanish-language media, who feature this issue in various forms on a daily basis. Due to their special status, Cubans have had their ‘own’ legislation, the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966. Even after modification by the Clinton administration in 1995, it is favourable compared to the legislation and procedures which apply to other migrants. Cuban-American interviewees in their early twenties confirmed the points made by older interviewees but were also very eager to emphasise the positive points they associated with living in a vibrant Hispanic community.

The question is where do the Cubans lie in solidarity with the rest of the Hispanics, especially in the issue of immigration. One could argue that the reason why we have Cubans in the House and Cubans in the Senate and lots of prosper in Miami is because of the fact that we have laws that somehow favour our prosperity and in that sense allow us to achieve these things. Then again, we are all hard-working, not to discredit the hard work of the many individuals in this community. I would not say that there is any animosity between different Hispanic groups. There might be – like within any heterogeneous society – points of friction. I think one of the great things about Miami is that you can hear so many different Spanish dialects being spoken. (Interviewee, June 2006)

Even though there might not be any friction, neither is there an overwhelming sense of Hispanic belonging or a sense of a Hispanic community in Miami. With one group being so present and strongly represented in the media as well as politically, there is no need to embrace pan-Hispanic sentiments for the majority. At the same time, this could also be read as an indication for the awareness of national belonging, i.e. it does in fact make a significant difference whether someone has Mexican, Cuban, Colombian or Venezuelan roots. This notion will be considered further in chapter 6 on Spanish-language television.

## **Concluding remarks**

Miami would not be what it is today if it were not for the Cuban-American community. And the same holds true in reverse: the Cuban-American community would not be what it is today if it were not for Miami, its geographical location in relation to Cuba, the mnemonic triggers it offers for remembering and dwelling upon nostalgic reminiscences. Miami gave home to the historic exiles and provided them with extraordinary opportunities. However, this was supported by the larger framework of the U.S. The early arrivals were classed as exiles in a greater political conflict. The Cold War led the U.S. administration to give Cuban migrants a special status that is often enviously looked upon by others. These positive starting points make the Hispanic community and Hispanic identity an additional layer that has little to offer to Cuban-Americans.

The success of the Cuban-American community itself became a myth, epitomised in narratives such as the one in *The Lost City* (2005). But accomplishments rooted in the United States came at a price. Feelings of nostalgia are mixed with guilt and with a lingering sense of a duty unfulfilled. Fidel Castro stayed in power and his longevity has caused ruptures between the exile community and Cubans based on the island. Space and time gave room to interrelations, multiplicities and continuous construction (Massey 2005) in Miami and Havana alike, although these might not necessarily bring a happy reunion of the Cubans on the island and the Cuban diaspora.



In terms of cultural activity, Havana and Miami have a lot in common. But politics and ideologies are holding them apart. The Cuban-American community in Miami is struggling to find a balance between looking back, sharing the pains and celebrating the successes of the past, but also looking forward to where they want to go as a collective. What is it that holds them together as a group? The media have an essential role to play in these processes of negotiation. The next chapter investigates the relationship between Miami-based newspapers and the Cuban-American community.

## 4. Spanish- and English-language newspapers in Miami

### Introduction

This chapter traces and scrutinises the development of the Miami-based press in the wake of and after the Cuban revolution in 1959. The aim here is not to give a comprehensive history of the main players involved, but to look at how Miami's local English- and Spanish-language press has dealt with and interacted with the incoming and developing Cuban-American community. Smaller case studies and noteworthy incidents will be utilized to draw upon and illustrate wider issues at stake. My interview data clearly indicated that the press, on a micro-level in articles and as institutions on a macro-level, provides an excellent example of the dynamics that characterise Miami's community relations, the influence and power of the Cuban-American community and the complex and at times contradictory interests, agendas and ethical concerns which come into play.

This chapter is narrative-driven and gives ample room to the voices I encountered in the field. The first section considers the role of *Diario Las Américas* in Miami's media landscape. The market is dominated by the two editions of the *Herald*, the English-language *The Miami Herald* and its Spanish-language counter-part *El Nuevo Herald*, to which the second section is dedicated. *The Miami Herald* especially has had a challenging relationship with parts of the Cuban-American community. One recent example of this is the Martí case, which will be examined in more detail. The chapter ends with a consideration of the underlying issues in terms of journalistic ethics, professional identity and reflection on the exile community.

### Cuban writings in the United States

The development of the press in Miami illustrates the changes taking place within the Cuban-American community as well as the demographic modifications that Miami has

experienced over the past five decades. However, it is worth noting that Fidel Castro's accession to power did not trigger the development of Spanish-language or bi-lingual publications as such. The United States and the State of Florida in particular have had long-established relations with Cuba, for example in terms of trade, migration and cultural exchanges. Furthermore, relations were also established on an intellectual level, as shown in Rodrigo Lazo's *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (2005), an analysis of mid-nineteenth century Cuban writers who left the island which was at the time under Spanish rule, to establish themselves in the U.S. and reflect on future options for Cuba from abroad. The result was the establishment of more than seventy newspapers during the nineteenth century. The papers varied significantly in size, duration of publication and the political outlook they promoted in terms of Cuba's future but nevertheless they bear witness to the increasing relations between the United States and the small neighbouring island in the south:

The development of newspaper publication by Cubans in the United States can be traced back to a long-standing two-way flow of economic, political and cultural exchange between the United States and the island. U.S. travellers and investors made their way to Cuba, and the island's intellectual and economic elite reciprocated in kind. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. became a major buyer of Cuban sugar and coffee as well as provider of imports for the island. (Lazo 2005, 7-8)

The *periodiquitos*, as they are referred to in Miami, newspapers of varying sizes, written by members of the Cuban exile community therefore follow a long tradition of Cuban writing in the United States. A selection of *periodiquitos* can still easily be found in restaurants, cafés and shops in Little Havana today. The Cuban Heritage Collections at the University of Miami hosts the largest collections of *periodiquitos*, among them also publications from Cubans exiled outside of the U.S. In an annotated bibliography, Esperanza de Varona (1987) emphatically summarises the content and importance of the *periodiquitos* in the following words:

This bibliography is more than a mere listing of periodicals published by an exile group during a specific period of time and collected by a university. It is a

chronicle of the hopes and aspirations of the Cuban people in exile, of the struggle to maintain a unity of purpose, of the need to preserve, add to, and transmit cultural heritage. These periodicals are heroic not only in terms of the financial hardships which most of them have had to surmount in order to be published, but also with regard to the very nature of the exile soul striving to be one again, someday, in a free Cuba. (de Varona 1987, xiii)

The *periodiquitos* go beyond the political and polemical realm and cover a great number of topics, ranging from literature, finance and religion, everyday life (in Cuba as well as in host societies) to sporting activities. They are of particular importance for those Cuban-Americans who prefer to read and write in Spanish. The fact that the majority of the *periodiquitos* were and are kept afloat through advertising income, as well as the investment of the contributors' own capital (de Varona 1987), demonstrates the strong conviction of Cuban-Americans of the need to make a contribution to the public sphere – even if it is limited in duration and scope. An in-depth analysis of the *periodiquitos* would go well beyond the limits of this thesis; however, it is worth keeping in mind that these periodicals are easily accessible to Cuban-Americans based in Miami and form part of people's media consumption.

Another distinctive backdrop worth keeping in mind when looking at the interactions between the Cuban-American community and the press in Miami is the experience Cubans had with this medium before leaving the island. The press, including newspapers, magazines, bulletins, was well-developed in Cuba:

During the 1950's [sic], the Cuban people were probably among the most informed in the world, living in an uncharacteristically large media market for such a small country. Cubans had a choice of 58 daily newspapers during the late 1950's [sic], according to the UN statistical yearbook. Despite its small size, this placed Cuba behind only Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico in the region. (Cuba Transition Project – Cuba Facts – Issue 43 – December 2008)

An example of a major success story in terms of publishing that accompanied a Cuban family from the island into exile is told by Cristina Saralegui (1998). Her grandfather, Francisco Saralegui became known as the 'Paper-Czar' as he supplied paper to all of Cuba's newspapers and presses (Saralegui 1998, 12-13). He also co-owned *Publicaciones Unidas*,

S.A. (*PUSA*) and, together with his sons, the family became more and more involved in the editorial side of the business. The name Saralegui became associated with famous publications such as *Bohemia*, *Carteles* and *Vanidades*.

It is important to note that when my family bought *Vanidades*, the magazine had a circulation of 17,000. When we left Cuba in July 1960, circulation had risen to over 170,000 copies per edition.

*Vanidades* emigrated from Cuba with my family, not as a material possession, since Castro did not allow us to take anything from our country, but merely as a piece of paper registering the name and ownership of the magazine. But there was also the spirit and vision of my father and uncle, who were immediately ready to start over. (Saralegui 1998, 21)

The Saraleguis are a classic example of the affluent and industrious Cuban families coming to Miami in the 1960s. The historic exiles had the resources and know-how to set up new businesses in South Florida. Given the cultural capital and the extraordinary circumstances the exiles found themselves in, demand for local, regional, national and international news was high.

One Miami-based afternoon newspaper, which one could almost suspect that it had been waiting for the Cubans to arrive, is *Diario Las Américas*. Until today, *Diario* makes a significant contribution to Spanish-language media scene in Miami and will therefore be examined in detail below.

## ***Diario Las Américas***

The development of *Diario Las Américas*, the first Spanish-language paper in the United States of America, is closely linked with Cuban history and with the Cuban exile. A common misunderstanding in Miami is therefore that *Diario* is Cuban-owned, but it was in fact founded and still is in the hands of the Nicaraguan Aguirre family. Horacio Aguirre and his brother Francisco, started publishing on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1953, the U.S. Day of Independence. Only a few weeks later, on July 26<sup>th</sup>, Fidel Castro and his guerrillas launched their first attempt to take over Cuba. Alejandro Aguirre, Horacio's son and current deputy editor and publisher, sees this as a significant development for the paper: '[A]lmost from day one, the

coverage of Cuba and the Cuban revolution has played an important part in this newspaper' (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006). However, the proximity to Cuba and the stable relations between Cuba and South Florida in the early 1950s were not the main reason for choosing Miami as the location for the paper. When looking for a sensible place to start a Spanish-language paper, the Aguirre brothers chose Miami because they anticipated that, with increasing aviation mobility, its geographical position would make Miami a port of entry for many Latin Americans travelling to the United States. The Aguirres' prediction turned out to be right, but the development of Miami into the Mecca of the Cuban exile has had an even stronger effect. Alejandro Aguirre confirms this:

[C]ertainly things changed when in 1959 Fidel Castro overthrew the Batista regime in Cuba. You had a mass exodus in Cuba, most of which came to Miami. It changed Miami radically, and it changed us as well because we had to cover very closely what was going on in this community and in Cuba. That was not just for the benefit of the Cubans here in Miami but also because everything that was going on in Cuba has had continental ramifications in other countries – the exporting of the revolution to other countries in the 1970s and the civil wars in Latin America in the 1980s, a lot of these events can be tied back to the situation in Cuba. That was something that changed our paper. (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006)

*Diario Las Américas* comes out six days a week, Tuesdays to Sundays. It is an afternoon paper with all articles written in Spanish. However, the editorials are translated into English for the online version which can be found at <http://www.diariolasamericas.com>.

*Diario's* brief mission statement under its title reads '*Por la Libertad, la Cultura y la Solidaridad Hemisferica*' (Dedicated to Freedom, Culture and Solidarity in the Americas). According to Alejandro Aguirre the paper aims to promote 'solidarity between the different hemispheres and serves as a bridge between people in the United States and in South America.' Its focus is 'very inter-American and international' (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006). This purpose is reflected on the title page and the first section of the paper, with a mix of local, state, U.S. and international news, very often from Latin American countries, Cuba and the Caribbean, including sports. Section A of *Diario* also includes opinion pieces, again

with a very international focus. Section B focuses on Miami and Florida and also carries more specialised articles on local events, financial news, health, science, human interests, social happenings, local sports and the like.

### ***Diario Las América's* strong links to the Cuban-American community**

In contrast to other news providers in Miami, *Diario Las Américas* welcomed the arrival of the Cubans in Miami. The affiliations between members of the Cuban-American community hold strong until today; older and more conservative Cuban-Americans prefer the *Diario* to its Spanish-language opponent, *El Nuevo Herald*. The paper is seen as the publication of *el exilio historico* – the historic exiles. To gain and maintain this level of trust and loyalty among its readers, *Diario* had to tread carefully throughout the years:

In the highly politicized milieu of the Cuban exiles, objective news was hard to come by; the émigrés trusted the *Diario* to give them just that. While the publishers were clearly anti-Castro, the *Diario* straddled Little Havana's political fence, careful not to side with any particular fraction in the exile community, and it provided a forum for the discussion of opposing political views. (García 1996, 104-105)

During fieldwork I witnessed the strong links between the Aguirre family and the Cuban-American community on several occasions. Horacio and Francisco Aguirre, the founders of *Diario*, were themselves exiled from Nicaragua after the coup d'état of former president Somoza against his successor Leonardo Arguello Barreto in 1947. Therefore, the Aguirre family shares the experience of having to leave one's country with the Cubans in Miami. In separate interviews, both Alejandro Aguirre and his sister, Helen Aguirre Ferré, spoke very compassionately of the Cuban-American community, the experience of loss and their new life in the United States. When asked if they were tired of talking about Cuban issues, both siblings answered with a firm 'No' and expressed their sympathy for the experiences the Cuban people had to go through since 1959. Alejandro Aguirre summarised his thoughts on the Cuban exile in the following words:

Everything that was once black is now white; everything that was once good is now bad. And everybody has to smile for the camera. All of a sudden they had to go to a place that was willing to accept them but that was totally different. They had to adapt, they had problems with language. But they were highly educated, which was a tremendous help. But all of sudden all that was important to them was literally pulled out from under them. So there is a tremendous sense of loss, there is this tremendous vacuum, there is this tremendous void that they tried to fill here. It only happened mentally. They had to re-create that sense of country and home here. It is natural that they were and are interested in what is going on in Cuba. There was a time in Miami when 80% of the Hispanic population was Cuban. As much as I can understand the other 20% saying 'Enough', did they have any doubt if it was 80% Columbians that it was going to be all Columbian news? Be real. (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006)

Sentiments of appreciation are mutual here. During a board meeting of the *Amigos* (Friends) of the Cuban Heritage Collection at the University of Miami in October 2008, it was announced that Horacio Stuart-Aguirre, a brother of Alejandro and Helen, was going to take over as chairman of the board. The *Amigos* present at the meeting were pleased to hear this piece of news and one *Amigo* (and former chairman) made a spontaneous contribution of how delighted he was to see a member of the Aguirre family 'who has done so much for the Cubans here in Miami's take on this position. Horacio Stuart-Aguirre is stepping in the footsteps of his father, Horacio Aguirre, who was a founding member of the Cuban Heritage Collection.

### ***Diario Las América's* demanding readership**

Even though the Aguirre family and *Diario Las Américas* have always been strongly associated with news on Cuba and news for the Cuban-American community in Miami, the paper does not want to be limited in this respect. Alejandro Aguirre is not apprehensive about the strong associations with this particular group, but confirms that the community can be very demanding:

[S]ometimes you have to remind people that we have other things because there is other population in Miami. There always has been, but even more are here now, if you look at the figures. We have to remind people that we have to bring news from other countries as well because that was always the core mission, to be an inter-American newspaper. We do not want to be limited to one area, especially



here in Miami, but it is just one of the areas we cover. (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006)

In one way Helen Aguirre Ferré agrees with her brother on this. The paper would be misled by putting too great an emphasis on Cuba given Miami's current demographic make-up. As opinion page editor and in her role of overseeing the local news section, she is not tired of discussing and including articles about Cuban issues per se. However, over the years she has changed her way of reporting and selecting news stories about Cuba and Cuban-Americans in the States:

Unless there is something new to tell, we can't afford to do same old, same old. We have to give people reason to buy the newspaper. I do get very tired of the same old, same old from some writers who have gotten too predictable in what they are going to say. I do not even have to read [the article] and I can tell where it's going. I can just tell by the headline. (Helen Aguirre Ferré, June 2006)

On the other hand, however, the Aguirre siblings drew different pictures as to where the real strength and the mission of the paper lie. In contrast to the emphasis on international matters that her brother put forward, Helen Aguirre Ferré portrays local and state news as one of the most important elements of the publication:

Our audience of *Diario* is Hispanic, the majority is Cuban. To me it is Cuban-American today because it is a younger... you know, time has moved on. Those who read our newspaper and are 50 years old are hyphenated Americans which is why I try to put a lot of focus on state and local issues whenever possible because even though they will always have a strong interest in their cultural heritage, invariably everything is rooted locally to where they live. Their community is in South Florida, even though their curiosity, their passion and their heart might be in Cuba. But when push comes to shove, this is where they live, this is where they vote, this is where their parents are buried, and where their children are going to school. (Helen Aguirre Ferré, June 2006)

The above statements by Alejandro Aguirre and Helen Aguirre Ferré shed light on the difficulties faced by their paper. People who could be classified as historic exiles, the *Diario*'s proto-typical readers, are ageing and dying. Younger members of the community have a hyphenated identity and possibly define themselves more American than Cuban, with English being their preferred language when reading a newspaper.

## New directions?

The image of *Diario Las Américas* as the Cuban paper has to some extent become more of a drawback than a plus point when it comes to recruiting new readers – be it in the Cuban-American community or among other Hispanic groupings. Decision-makers at the *Diario* are aware of this image and the disadvantages that being ‘the Cuban paper’ brings. Although according to Alejandro Aguirre there has never been an editorial decision to consciously move away from Cuban topics, *Diario*’s marketing department thinks it necessary to strongly accentuate the ‘non-Cuban’ content of the paper. Furthermore, the paper’s online version aims to brighten the slightly stale image of the publication.

I am trying to get the online product to move away from the newspaper. I want it to go through its own natural evolution and forget about the newspaper. And if it means that the website and the newspaper compete against each other – so be it. But it may also mean that the web edition goes into something totally different and evolves into a totally different product. We will utilise common resources where it makes sense but I do not want to tie one to the other because anything that is online needs to take advantage of all of the market forces and technological forces very, very quickly and that is something the print press cannot do. (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006)

The inter-American focus on the one hand and the local/regional connection to Miami and Florida on the other is also reflected in the structure of the paper as described above. Apart from the title page, international news and local/regional news, international sports and local/regional sports are not combined in one larger news (or sports) section but kept completely separate. Despite the coloured pictures on the title pages of Section A and B, the layout of the articles and impractically long pages give the paper an old-fashioned feel. One informant described the paper as ‘a dinosaur’ and ‘an anachronism’ (Interviewee, June 2006). Another informant commented:

I wish *Diario Las Américas* had been smart enough to modernise. Because they are Nicaraguans, not Cubans, but the whole family have been so loyal to us, all along. If they were a modern newspaper... The joke in Miami is [because *Diario* put on tomorrow’s date] it is the newspaper that is published today with tomorrow’s date and yesterday’s news – which is true!<sup>28</sup> (Interviewee, January 2007)

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<sup>28</sup> *Diario* is delivered in the afternoon. The paper carries the date of the next day. However, the stories included have already been reported by other news outlets on the previous day.

*Diario* held on to its mission of being a pan-American newspaper and continued to be a paper of Latin America even when its circulation in the U.S., for example in New York City, in some places in New Jersey and on the West Coast, was on the increase. The fact that *Diario* did not take advantage of these emerging markets has been the ground for endless rumours in Miami. *Diario* is a ‘mystery to many people and there are all kinds of theories as to why it is the way it is’ (Interviewee, January 2007). A common belief is that the two founders and owners, brothers Francisco and Horacio Aguirre, could never agree on what the mission of the paper should be and for that reason the scope of the paper always remained rather limiting and limited, as one interviewee explains:

Some people say that it gets money from the federal government, that it is subsidised. I am not sure if that is the case; I would not be surprised if it was. Some people say that the two brothers who own the newspaper have always been at odds as to what the paper’s mission should be. One of them [Francisco] lives in Washington, he has always met... he’s always been in some kind of diplomatic mission. That is the crowd he hangs around with. And he is not interested in voter issues, or Miami issues and stuff like that. He’s apparently the majority owner of the newspaper. He lives over there, his family live over there. The other brother [Horacio] is the one who lives in Miami. He is now an aging man, probably no longer in direct charge of the newspaper. But I think there has always been this theory that these two brothers have been at odds as to the mission of the newspaper and that has really prevented the paper from growing, developing, becoming a modern paper, competitive and so on. And there are many other theories, including CIA-related theories and stuff like that which I think are rather hard to believe. (Interviewee, January 2007)

Francisco Aguirre died in September 2008. His obituary confirmed his close relationship to the American intelligence community, though Francisco’s son is keen to point out that his father never worked for the CIA himself (Valdez 2009). So far, no noteworthy changes can be observed with regard to the direction and the mission of *Diario Las Américas* after Francisco Aguirre’s death. But regardless of whether *Diario* will undergo a significant make-over in the coming months or years, catching up with the local competition in Miami will not be an easy task.

A further challenge the paper was facing at the time of research were the distribution costs. Not being the dominant Spanish-language newspaper in Miami but having to cover almost the same geographic area as *El Nuevo Herald* to stay in the competition made distribution a more difficult task for *Diario* than for its competitor with higher circulation figures. *El Nuevo* can make use of the same distribution channels and arrangements as its English-language sister paper while economies of scale do not work this way for *Diario*. The supermarkets and little shops around the University of Miami campus in Coral Gables would always have copies of *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald* but *Diario Las Américas* was much harder to get hold of. However, several interviewees also commented on the fact that *Diario* might also be on newsstands in Washington D.C. and in metropolitan areas of South America. While that confirms the ambitious, pan-American approach, it does not make *Diario* more attractive to local advertisers in Miami, as Alejandro Aguirre has to acknowledge: ‘I have advertisers coming up to me, saying “It is very nice that you sell your newspaper all the way up in Washington but it does not sell me anything in my supermarket”’ (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006).

Despite these difficulties, Alejandro Aguirre remains positive regarding the future of *Diario Las Américas* – in print and online: ‘I am not worried of the newspaper as an agenda-setting editorial type of organisation. I think we will always be there if we play our cards right’ (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006). An outlook that could prove to be far too optimistic, given the decline in circulation figures of the paper. No reliable circulation figures could be found for *Diario Las Américas*, but even during time of fieldwork it had already gone down to 57,000 according to deputy editor Alejandro Aguirre. It is likely that the current economic climate has led to further decline.

In terms of circulation figures, things are looking a bit better for *El Nuevo Herald*, *Diario*’s main Spanish-language competitor which will be examined in the next section.

## ***The Miami Herald – El Miami Herald - El Nuevo Herald***

The following paragraphs examine the evolution of *The Miami Herald* and *El Miami Herald*. In 1999 the Spanish-language *Herald* was renamed *El Nuevo Herald*. Both, the English- as well as the Spanish-language, *Heralds* have had challenging experiences with the Cuban-American community and the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) in particular. These challenges and the difficulty of serving their diverse readership will be one main point of focus.

### ***The Miami Herald***

While owners and staff at the *Diario* were happy to welcome the exiles as readers (and as reporters joining their newsroom), other groups based in the city of Miami and the county it forms part of, Miami-Dade, had reservations regarding the new arrivals. These were shared and reflected by Miami's largest English-language paper: *The Miami Herald*. Founded in 1903 as *The Miami Evening Record*, the paper was renamed on 1 December 1910 (*The Miami Herald – About Us* 2009). According to its website, *The Miami Herald* Media Company (which comprises of *The Miami Herald* as well as *El Nuevo Herald*) has 1,165 full-time members of staff and 244 part-timers. So far, *The Miami Herald* has won 19 Pulitzer prizes.

*The Miami Herald* took a relatively long period of time to find ways to accommodate the early exiles and later arrivals in the 1970s and 1980s. It therefore comes as no surprise that, in contrast to the harmonious relationship the *Diario* has with Hispanic groups in Miami, and the Cubans, in particular, *The Miami Herald* and its Spanish-language counterpart, *El Nuevo Herald*, cannot look back on a cordial connection with the Cuban-American community. For a number of reasons, the two publications and their former corporate parent, Knight-Ridder, faced several sites of conflict with the Cuban-American community over the past decades. In June 2006 Knight-Ridder was bought by the McClatchy Company, 'the

third-largest newspaper company in the United States' (The McClatchy Company – Press Releases 2006).

As shall be illustrated in the following paragraphs, the change of ownership did however not bring significant change to the strained relationship between some members of the Cuban-American community and *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*. Despite an acceptance of the early exiles, *The Miami Herald* was not in favour of a continuing intake of Cubans in the 1960s and 1970s. Like the majority of its prototypical readers, *The Miami Herald* opposed the freedom flights:

Editorials in *The Miami Herald* argued that the number of people wanting to leave Cuba was infinite, and the U.S. simply could not accommodate them all. While the editors celebrated the rapid economic adjustment of the Cuban exiles – whom they called the “cream of the nation” – they voiced the widespread concern that Cuba’s cream had already been skimmed, and that the continuing influx of lower-class Cubans presented an economic burden to the United States. (García 1996, 45)

The *Herald*’s unemotional and Anglo-biased analyses of the situation have been a seed of discontentment for members of the Cuban-American community throughout the decades. Editorials similar in tone were published once again during the Mariel boatlift in 1980. With emotions running high on Floridian shores as well as in Cuba, the Cuban-Americans based in Miami became fully aware of the opinions *The Herald* was expressing at the time:

As the voice of the Anglo establishment, it [*The Miami Herald*] considered the Mariel exodus a serious double threat: first, as an economic cataclysm, given the depressed state of local industry and the negative impact of the inflow on Miami’s status as a tourist destination; and second, as a direct threat to the establishment power structure, given the addition of many thousands to an already uncomfortably large Cuban population. (Portes and Stepick 1993, 27)

The Cuban-Americans already based in the city did not regularly get a chance to counter such arguments in the press, as most exile organisations were concerned with what was going on in their homeland, not local politics in Miami-Dade.

## From supplement to independent newspaper: *El Nuevo Herald*

Up to this point, *The Miami Herald* was still only published in English and leading figures at the Knight-Ridder Corporation, the owner of the paper at the time, were not very enthusiastic about a change or an addition in terms of language as the following anecdote recounted by an executive of the Knight-Ridder Corporation illustrates:

So we made a bet in 1960 [about English becoming the dominant language] in Miami as a large number of Cuban refugees came in following Castro's takeover. That didn't happen as fast we thought it would. We belatedly started in our business a Spanish edition called *El Miami Herald*. It's a very expensive proposition for us, but it has helped us gain acceptance and circulation in the Hispanic community. We think it is important to us and important to them that *The Herald* be available in both Spanish and English. We circulate that Spanish section in conjunction with *The Miami Herald*, so that we believe that, by virtue of having the two together, we'll eventually move back toward the ultimate utilization of English as the primary language. (Interviewee quoted in Portes and Stepick 1993, 15)

The executive must have lost his bet; Miami is a bi-lingual city and several of the interviewees confirmed that not being able to speak Spanish might be detrimental to one's professional success in the city.

Although the establishment of *El Miami Herald* in 1976 was certainly a noteworthy event as it was the 'first Spanish section in a major American newspaper' (García 1996, 105), it did not bring *The Miami Herald* the increase in subscriptions and sales the management was ultimately looking for. In 1987, *El Miami Herald* was assigned a make-over and was re-launched as *El Nuevo Herald*. Susana Barciela, a Cuban-American who now works as an editorial writer for *The Miami Herald*, remembers: 'My first job was in marketing and I worked on the launch of *El Nuevo Herald* because it was completely taken to a different level. That was in 1987. [...] [The b]ig business issue was the question whether to rename it and have it as a supplement to the *Herald* or whether it should be a separate paper. They [strategic management] were too afraid that it would minimize the sale of the English-language paper. I think that hampered *El Nuevo* for quite a while' (Susana Barciela, June 2006). From 1987 onwards, the re-vamped version, *El Nuevo Herald*, was still a supplement

of its English language sister paper *The Miami Herald*. They began to separate in 1997. Humberto Castelló, executive editor of *El Nuevo Herald*, recounts:

Essentially, 1999 was the year in which *El Nuevo Herald* became a paper that could stand on its own, with its own personality, independence and everything. It has been a success. Without the Cubans, there would not have been the need to have a publication at that time. (Humberto Castelló, June 2006)

Knight-Ridder and *The Herald* were arguably slow to react to the demographic changes of Miami and Dade County, partly because – like the Cubans themselves – many Anglos were still under the impression and possibly hoping that the Cubans would return to the island in the near future. And if that was not the case, Cubans were expected to learn English and eventually use it as their first language. As it turned out, nobody was likely to return to the homeland. Quite the contrary: with the *balseiros* (rafters) crisis of the early 1990s, more Cubans arrived in South Florida (see Appendix 3).

But despite a growing Hispanic community and increasing circulation figures of the Spanish-language paper, *El Nuevo Herald* continued to be treated as an ‘unwanted child’. The paper receives fewer resources than its English-language counterpart and Spanish-language journalists are on a lower salary than those working for *The Miami Herald*. Susana Barciela points out that *El Nuevo* ‘does an incredible job considering how few resources they have’ (June 2006). Despite highly committed reporters at *El Nuevo*, many of them Cuban and Cuban-American, the English-language paper remains the better funded one, with more resources and more opportunities for staff. These differences can in part be explained by circulation figures where *The Miami Herald* clearly outpaces *El Nuevo Herald*.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, like Alejandro Aguirre of *Diario Las Américas*, Humberto Castelló is positive regarding the future of *El Nuevo Herald*. *El Nuevo* is to remain a local paper, targeting

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<sup>29</sup> Average circulation figures for *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald* (stated in parenthesis) for the period of March to September 2010 were as follows: Weekdays 151,612 (57,749), Saturdays 127,230 (54,056) and Sundays 214, 891 (73,616); <http://abcas3.accessabc.com/ecirc/newstitlesearchus.asp>; accessed 27 November 2010.



readers in Miami, while reflecting the Latin American reality. Castelló confirms: ‘This is a city run by different people from different countries and most of them were born in those countries. They are interested in what is happening in Miami but also in what is happening in their countries. Talking about events in Bogotá is as natural here as it is in Bogotá. But we are a local newspaper and we cover all the local news for our readers’ (Humberto Castelló, June 2006). Satisfying such diverse readership continues to be a challenge for *El Nuevo* but Humberto Castelló strongly opposes the idea of quotas for news stories:

I don’t believe in that [referring to quotas]. I believe in news and what is interesting for the reader. It is a reality that 50% of the readers are of Cuban origin. You have to ‘take care’ of them; they have a particular interest in what is happening in their country. That is the reason we have a Cuba page. But the reason we have a big Latin American section is because of all the others. If you see our front page every day, it looks like a schizophrenic newspaper. The big headline is probably about Bogotá, Caracas, Havana not Miami. That is the reason, and it is very successful. (Humberto Castelló, June 2006)

Humberto Castelló’s concern with ‘taking care’ of Cuban readers stems - at least to some extent - from a series of events which took place in the 1980s and 1990s. During these two decades, the Cuban-American community developed into the most influential, resourceful and dynamic group among the Hispanics based in the city. When scrutinizing these events, it becomes apparent that the presence and continuous arrival of Cubans in South Florida impacted hugely on the development of the press. After all, the Cuban-American community was a market that could not be neglected and was also a political force to reckon with, demanding a forum for themes and issues important to them.

### **The *Heralds* and the Cuban-American National Foundation**

The history of *The Miami Herald* in the 1980s and early 1990s is intertwined with the involvement of the Cuban American National Foundation and one of its most prominent founding members, Jorge Más Canosa. Más Canosa has been described as ‘industrious and hardworking’ (Bardach 2002, 135) and his achievement certainly prove him worthy of these adjectives. His first job in the U.S. was as a dishwasher in a hotel. By the time of his

death, in November 1997, his wealth was estimated to be over \$400 million (Bardach 2002, 135). A committed and ingenious anti-Castrista, he realized it could be worthwhile to employ political, i.e. non-paramilitary, means to work against the people in power establishment in Havana. In 1981, he therefore set up the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF). The foundation was modelled after AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a highly influential lobby group in the United States. Más Canosa and with him the CANF became powerful players in Miami as well as in Washington D.C. in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Gerardo Reyes, a staff writer for *El Nuevo* remembers the power of the CANF in the following way:

It was a dominant group of friends, influential people like Jorge Más Canosa who controlled, not only politically, the trends and the attitudes of many Cubans. But also he wanted to control what the media said, about Cubans and about them, so it was a very uncomfortable situation. Even to the point where the vending machines of the newspaper in the streets were vandalized with red ink. They also ran ads on the public buses that said ‘I don’t believe *El Nuevo Herald*’. That was a big campaign against us. I think it was a very sour situation and when you wrote about them, you had to be very careful. Anything that set out a problem with them... sometimes you had to take a copy of an article or column to the in-house attorney and he would recommend this and that.<sup>30</sup> (Gerardo Reyes, June 2006)

By the time *El Nuevo* was launched in 1987, relations between the *The Miami Herald* and the Cuban-American National Foundation were already strained. The difference in funding between the English and the Spanish-language paper is also reflected by the importance assigned to each respectively as a member of the Cuban-American National Foundation indicates:

The conflict between the Cuban community and the *Herald* reached its peak when, after the resignation of one of the directors of the Cuban-American National Foundation, the newspaper started speculating, without basis of fact, about internal division of the organization. We decided to write an open letter. Jorge Mas Canosa [...] brought a writer from Washington who wrote the letter in an afternoon, and it was published, as a paid announcement, the following day.

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<sup>30</sup> Gerardo Reyes (June 2006) also emphasised that despite the practice of having articles looked over by an attorney, he never had to self-censor his articles.

The *Herald* never expected that we Cubans would do something like that! There was a meeting in which, in fact we considered organizing a boycott against the newspaper. Richard Capen, the editor, called to complain, but, faced with the threat of a massive boycott, the newspaper relented and has changed course one hundred and eighty degrees in recent months. We've told Capen that it does not matter what the *Nuevo Herald* [...] publishes [...]. Much more important is what is published in English, which is read nationwide. The *Herald* sometimes plays a double game, publishing articles in English that do not appear in Spanish and vice versa. (Portes and Stepick 1993, 15)

This criticism of The *Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald* surfaced on several occasion during fieldwork. Readers of both papers do not understand why some articles find their way into the sister paper while others do not. Although some readers might be aware that the papers now work independently and even that *El Miami Herald* was never intended to be a complete translation of its English-language sister paper, a feeling remains that some news stories for 'dubious' reasons never make their way to the other newsroom. One interviewee suggested the role of a liaison editor to solve this issue, which could even have a positive effect on community relations and lead to a greater understanding between English- and Spanish-language readers. This outlook might be rather too optimistic. As the following section on the Martí Moonlighter Story will show, more than a liaison officer might be needed to let the two papers cooperate successfully. It is these difficulties that are, at least in part, responsible for certain articles only appearing in one language. I did not encounter any substantiated argument for a coherent strategy of excluding certain information from specific groups.

With the death of Jorge Más Canosa in November 1997, the Cuban American National Foundation lost much of its influence in Washington and in Miami. As with all organisations of this type, the CANF did not (and does not) speak for everyone in the community but was in fact known for a stringent approach regarding all dealings with Fidel Castro, including no leniency regarding the trade embargo imposed by the U.S. administration. Still, the relationship between Cuban-Americans, *The Miami Herald*, and *El Nuevo Herald* remains an uneasy one. Despite sharing the same building and being part of

the same company, even the divide between *El Nuevo Herald* and *The Miami Herald* runs deep as the story of *El Nuevo* journalists working for the Martí illustrates.

## **The Martí Moonlighter story**

The previous sections of this chapter introduced three main newspapers in Miami and their relation to the Cuban-American community. The following section offers a case-study of an incident that became known in the field as the Martí Moonlighter story. Radio and TV Martí are a government-funded broadcaster that targets the people of Cuba. The seed of this controversy was an article written by a *Miami Herald* staff writer called Oscar Corral. The case will be examined in detail below, as it is instructive on several levels. It raises questions about journalistic independence and ethics and the role of Miami media organisation and Miami-based journalists in relation to Cuba. It also gives an indication of the split that exist between *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*. It is furthermore insightful regarding how the *Heralds* relate to communities in different manners and at times practise different forms of journalism.

## **Critical articles about Cuban-American journalists**

Oscar Corral, a staff reporter for *The Miami Herald*, had been working on a series of stories investigating how taxpayers' money was spent by U.S. government organisations with the aim of promoting democracy in Cuba. What Corral found was that often the success of these programmes was very hard to determine because insufficient data could be collected in Cuba to confirm or refute their effectiveness on the ground. Going beyond that, Corral however also alleged that some of the programmes are purposefully designed to fail as the U.S. government under George Bush was not wholeheartedly trying to encourage change. A policy change in Cuba, which could potentially mean another mass exodus from the island to South Florida would pose a serious threat to the functioning of welfare systems, such as Medicare and Medicaid and bring with it a number of social, economic and political challenges. Corral asserts:

The reality is that these federal programmes have been largely unsuccessful and in some cases they have been designed to be unsuccessful by a very clever administration in the White House that does not really want to rock the boat for change in Cuba because that might cause mass migration. That was the point of one of my stories. (Oscar Corral, January 2007)

In the course of these investigations, Oscar Corral, a second-generation Cuban-American, also covered the work of Radio and TV Martí. Comparable to the Voice of America, Radio and TV Martí broadcast programmes to Cuba.<sup>31</sup>

On 8 September 2006 an article by Corral was published in *The Miami Herald*, stating that a number of journalists, including two full-time staff reporters and one freelancer of *El Nuevo Herald*, had been receiving payments for their contributions to Radio and TV Martí, which are funded by the U.S. government. Depending on one's own cultural background, this might not even look like a newsworthy story. But it certainly caused a stir not only in Florida, but also on a national level. The fact that journalists who are employed by independent, i.e. non-governmental media, had received money from government funded broadcasters was interpreted as a breach of journalistic ethics by some members of the profession (including Oscar Corral and members of staff at *The Miami Herald*). The two *El Nuevo Herald* staff writers, Wilfredo Cancio Isla and Pablo Alfonso, and the freelance writer, Olga Connor, all of them first-generation Cuban-Americans, lost their jobs.

As a reaction to these dismissals, 1,800 readers cancelled their subscription (Reyes 2006). A public debate ignited across local media whether this was unethical practice or whether the journalists in question had in fact done their job to the best of their abilities by also serving Cuban viewers and listeners based on the island. Following these reactions, all three *El Nuevo Herald* employees were re-hired and instead the publisher of *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*, Jesús Díaz, resigned.

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<sup>31</sup> During fieldwork it became apparent that it was extremely difficult to gain access or detailed information about the Martí. After Corral's story had been published in *The Miami Herald*, even people who were happy to be interviewed per se were not willing to talk about their contributions to the Martí.

## **Spy rumours, questions of journalistic ethics and an in-house investigation**

While the debate and the allegations were in full flow, Oscar Corral was accused of being a Cuban spy, a collaborator of Fidel Castro's regime, who had only run this story to cause distress among the Cuban-American community in Miami and to damage the reputation of well-respected journalists. Corral received death threats and his employer had to move him and his family into a house with 24-hour surveillance facilities. Corral remembers the days following the breaking of the story:

It just created a very tense atmosphere in Miami because even the public who had never read the original story were all of a sudden hearing from their favourite journalists and commentators that *The Miami Herald* was this evil entity and that it was against the Cuban exile community and that it was working for the Castro government. (Oscar Corral, January 2007)

What had contributed to the suspicion that Oscar Corral might be a Cuban spy were reports that before the story was published in *The Miami Herald*, it had already been discussed on a famous programme on Cuban state television called *Mesa Redonda* (Aguirre Ferré 2007). If Oscar Corral was not a spy, the fact that the story was being discussed on Cuban television could point towards a mole in the *Herald's* newsroom. One interviewee was highly convinced of this and could not understand how the *Herald* had not investigated this further:

So when The *Herald* says 'We don't have any reason to believe that we have a mole in the operation'; No 1 – Did you investigate? Did you even investigate? They are reporting this on Cuban state television before you even come out with it, the story that you are about to come out with. How does that happen if somebody is not leaking information? [...] Aren't you concerned as a newspaper that your stuff is leaking out, particularly when...they kind of just slop it off and let it roll off their back. [...] That is your credibility! It is one thing if they said 'Look, we did a six-months investigation and interviewed every single employee. We talked to people and nobody knows anything and we could not find a leak.' At least go through the motions of doing an investigation. (Interviewee, January 2007)

Another interviewee, a former *Miami Herald* employee, was certain that the ‘enemy’ was indeed much closer to home. He argued that the story had at least in part to do with the divide and the rivalry between the two papers:

Probably when the investigation of the Martí was decided in the newspaper in English, the other people who were... not only were they excluded, but they were probably targeted. I have no proof of that but I know that is the feeling that some of them have. They were targeted by colleagues from the other paper because of the long-standing, the long-ruling jealousies and differences and discrepancies as to the mission of the two papers and the scope and so on. (Interviewee, January 2007)

Several interviewees, among them even one senior *The Miami Herald* reporter, acknowledged that the story could have been handled and researched better as it was no secret that journalists working for various media in the city had also done work for the Martí. One journalist commented:

I also think that the work itself is very shabby and irresponsible in the way it was done. I think it was very poorly reported. It really ignored the history of how the two Martí came to be. These two Martí were the product of the global influence of the Cuban-American community, including especially commentators, journalists and so on. There was no mystery as to that relationship, you know, even though they portrayed the issue as though some of these people were working surreptitiously for the Martí and mysteriously, maybe illegally, or at least in violation of ethics and so on. (Interviewee, January 2007)

*The Miami Herald* arranged for an in-house investigation by Clark Hoyt, a long-time Knight-Ridder employee and now public editor of *The New York Times* (Pérez-Peña 2007). Hoyt’s analyses closely focused on the story and its presentation. In essence Hoyt concluded that *The Miami Herald* had rushed to press with this story while failing to acknowledge the wider historical and cultural context. The accusatory tone and the placement of the article on the title page encouraged the assumption that at the heart of the investigation was something much more sinister (Gómez 2006).

What angered many readers and journalists most about these events, was that despite the outcome of this investigation, *The Miami Herald* never gave an official apology. For that

reason, one of the full-time reporters at *El Nuevo* who had been named in the article, Pablo Alfonso, resigned after he had been rehired.

### **Differing newsroom philosophies**

This incident raises several questions regarding journalistic ethics and the role of media in a city that is still to a large extent dominated by an exile community, or to be more precise, a community with an exile mentality. The story and its aftermath demonstrate not only the lengthy and lingering clashes between two papers and two newsrooms; it also indicates a very different understanding of what the role of a journalist, and in particular a journalist in exile, is. Should it matter at all if a journalist had to involuntarily leave their country once they work for a media institution based in the host society? Humberto Castelló, executive editor of *El Nuevo Herald*, who at the time took the stance that *El Nuevo* employees should be allowed to contribute to programmes of Radio and TV Martí as long as they did not receive a payment, was aware of these culture difference:

For those who have not lived as adults under a socialist regime, understanding the passion exiles harbour for bringing democracy to Cuba can be difficult, Castelló said at an employee meeting three weeks ago. Some exiles see it as their duty to do what they can to overturn the Castro government. “It’s very normal and natural for us, for the Cuban journalists,” he said. (Humberto Castelló quoted in Hoag 2006 (b))

While some argue that it is strictly unacceptable to receive payments from any institution other than their employer (i.e. an independent media company), others brought forward the recurring notion of the opposition in exile that these journalists form a vital part of. The argument goes that an oppositional movement is established and sustained outside of Cuba as it cannot exist on the island.

Another argument brought forward was that there had never been any objection to journalists taking payments from other public institutions, such as universities and colleges. Olga Connor, the *El Nuevo* freelance writer who was initially fired, pointed out that she had worked at Florida International University as well and on the pay-cheque she received it



stated that the employer is the State of Florida. During the interview for this thesis, Connor seemed annoyed and angry about the incident and the way she was treated:

I signed a contract [to work as a freelance writer for *El Nuevo Herald*] and in no place in the contract does it say that I could not receive money from the government. The government – I’m talking about the state, federal... State of Florida. It is not like the President is sending you money. (Olga Connor, January 2007)

Then again, for most professional journalists working for a state university is on a different page than broadcasting to Cuba. Even though both activities are kept alive through public funds, they require very different ideological underpinnings.

A similar story about Olga Connor working for the Martí had been published in both papers in 2002. Connor had received permission for this work from the executive editor at the time Carlos Castañega. Interestingly, in 2002 the story did not receive wider attention and the management in charge in 2006 made the excuse of not being aware that this had been reported four years earlier. Why was the story not overlooked in 2006? One explanation could be that staff of *The Miami Herald* were aware that another newspaper, *The Chicago Tribune*, was also investigating and it was decided that it was advantageous to reveal these ‘open secrets’ in *The Miami Herald*, rather than having another newspaper break the story. Nevertheless, loyalty to the sister paper and Spanish-language colleagues was not at the forefront of when the decision to go to press with the Martí Moonlighter Story was made.

## **The story behind the story – what’s at stake?**

The story about journalists working for Radio and TV Martí and the way it was reported by *The Miami Herald* has several interlinking layers and demonstrates the complex relationship between different media organisations and between the media and the Cuban-American community. Also, taking points made about *Diario Las Américas* into account, this section reflects on some issues that underlie the narratives and data presented above. They can be broadly categorised into issues concerning journalistic ethics and newsroom philosophies,

secondly relating to the Cuban-American community and matters of allegiance and lastly as a matter pertaining to trust and the unity of the community.

### **Journalistic ethics and newsroom philosophies**

Miami's network of media institutions is tightly-knit. After the Martí-story came out in *The Miami Herald*, the radio stations would pick it up immediately, inviting the initially fired *El Nuevo Herald* staff writers for interviews and comments. The story was reported on TV and discussions quickly soared online. Though there is a significant amount of Spanish-language media on offer, they manage to closely scrutinise each other's output. This holds particularly true for talk radio and the popular call-in programmes which thrive on stories like these.

In a city like Miami, it is surprising that the management at *El Nuevo Herald* and *The Miami Herald* have been slow to pick up on and honestly assess the relationship between the sister papers and English- and Spanish-language colleagues. To some extent, the story was a story because of the failure to address cultural differences that existed between the two newsrooms. Diverse backgrounds of newsroom staff might, however, only be part of the problem. Another, much deeper-rooted concern can be situated with journalistic identity itself and with journalists asking themselves 'What is the purpose of my work?'. As the above quotes have shown, some Cuban-American journalists might find a very different answer to this than their Anglo colleagues and those trained in U.S. institutions of further and higher education. The dichotomy between personal ambitions and organisation requirements can lead to a 'professional crisis' as Waisbord (2000, 182-183) points out. The ongoing decline of circulation figures and media companies reducing the number of their newsroom staff adds to the climate of discontent, fear and distrust.

The story about *El Nuevo Herald* reporters working for the Martí's raises the question of how attentive a newspaper can or should be to the interests of their readers. In the first instance, this requires that the press can in fact make sense of events and patterns within the community and know who their readers are. For *Diario Las Américas* this has always been a

much more straightforward task than for *The Miami Herald* and *El Nuevo Herald*, although that is not to say that *Diario*'s history of being labelled as 'the Cuban paper' has not come at a price. How is such a diverse mix of communities best catered for? Furthermore, especially for the Spanish-language papers it is essential to keep the right balance between local and global news. Should a newspaper risk reporting something a significant (and very vocal) proportion of its readers do not want to read – and even find offensive? Oscar Corral commented that he and other reporters at *The Miami Herald* 'tried to do what we could. It has been a tough situation because we had to balance up the sentiments in the community with our journalistic principle' (Oscar Corral, January 2007). How is the public best served? Despite having two comprehensive Spanish-language newspapers based in Miami, some informants in the field felt not catered for after all. While *Diario* was considered as 'behind the times,' the *Heralds* were assessed as not being trustworthy. On the other hand, I met dedicated journalists who are trying to balance the needs of their diverse readers and audiences.

### **Matters of allegiances**

In relation to the exile community, the Martí story is a clear indication of the sensitivity certain topics bring out. Still today, fifty years after the Cuban revolution, discussion and information relating to Cuba are sensitive – and at the same time explosive – topics. Debates quickly spiral out of proportion, rumours start mixing with facts. What comes to light through these debates and threats is the underlying concern that 'the other' fundamentally does not understand. And the 'other' is not only part of the Anglo community or from another cultural background. Oscar Corral, the journalist who investigated the Martí story, was Cuban-American. So what gets exposed are the ruptures in Cuban-American community itself and the unsettling questions that the collective as well as each individual has to answer: the question of what it means to be 'Cuban-American' or a Cuban who lives in America or an American who has Cuban roots.

The commitment that a lot of first generation Cubans feel for their country is strong and in their minds this does not cause a discord with their work and their allegiance to values associated with life and work practices in the United States. During interviews and informal chats, several people commented that they simply could not follow the argument, made for example by some English-language journalists, of how there could be a conflict of interest at all. Furthermore, the fact that the story was investigated by a Cuban-American shows the broad and diverse spectrum of ideals and values that run through the Cuban-American community in Miami. Ultimately, every Cuban living outside of the island would like to see a prosperous and democratic Cuba. How to get there is not easily agreed upon. Oscar Corral argued that he was doing the exile community a service by investigating the spending of public money to bring democracy to Cuba. A lot of people would disagree with this stance.

### **Trust and unity of the community**

The Martí case also shows that there are still violent elements within the community and some – at least threaten – to take serious actions that go beyond any civilized debate. This part of the community has decreased over the past two decades or so, but it is not completely extinct. The threat to Oscar Corral, however, needs to be considered in a wider context of a fear of infiltration by Cuban agents.<sup>32</sup> Cases of Cuban spies that have infiltrated the Cuban-American community in Miami are not an everyday occurrence but they still come into the open from time to time. There is a discourse surrounding the penetration of the community which ultimately leads to the decline of trust: trust in each other, trust in the media and trust in institutions. This causes further fragmentation of the community as well as frustration. Of

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<sup>32</sup> When I first arrived in Miami, I was slightly uncomfortable with notions surrounding secret missions, agents, the infiltration of the Cuban-American community by Castro-loyal spies; I was afraid that in academic circles this might not be taken seriously and make my PhD resemble a bad replica of a Graham Greene novel. However, in the course of the project I realised that this is a true concern of some members of the Cuban-American community. It is impossible for me judge what is fact and what is fiction and paranoia. But cases such as the ones of the ‘Cuban Five’ ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/newshour/news/story/2007/07/070702\\_cuban\\_five.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/programmes/newshour/news/story/2007/07/070702_cuban_five.shtml) accessed 20 January 2011) and Ana Belén Montes (see Carmichael 2007) bear witness to something boiling beneath the surface.

course this by no means justifies (the threat of) violent actions but allows us to see the wider picture of what is at stake.

One last issue worth considering which was brought to light by the Martí case is memory and how history is dealt with or forgotten. Radio and TV Martí were established in Miami so that Cuban-American and other Spanish-language journalists could make a contribution to these broadcasts. The nature of modern journalistic work patterns, especially those of freelancers or part-timers, includes working for a variety of employers. For that matter, and also keeping in mind the intention of Radio and TV Martí to rely on the input by Cuban-American journalists, the way the Martí story was reported shows a lack of understanding of the historical development of the community. For many infuriated members of the Cuban-American community, the concern went deeper than the headlines in *The Miami Herald*. They were apprehensive that this was just a glimpse of the many misunderstanding of history and their situations and motivation.

## Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the local English-language press was slow and reluctant in reacting to Cuban migrants as potential readers and a potential market. The loyalties of *The Herald* and the Knight-Ridder Corporation were clearly on the side of the Anglo community. Although *Diario Las Américas* nowadays has a reputation of being outdated as a publication, often failing to include the latest news, several of the interviewees aged roughly 50 plus expressed their preference for *Diario*. In contrast to *El Nuevo Herald*, it has been there for them all along. Moreover, *Diario* had readily included Cuban issues.

Knight-Ridder, on the other hand, considered a Spanish-language paper as a threat to its existing English-language publication. Thanks to their economic success and their special status as exiles under the Cuban Adjustment Act, the Cuban-Americans were able to gain political influence on local, state and national/federal level. They could hardly be ignored –

either by the English- as well as the Spanish-language press. The evaluation of one member of the Cuban-American National Foundation that *El Nuevo* merely serves to appease Spanish-language speakers in Little Havana does certainly not hold true anymore. The online version of the paper is popular with Spanish-language users abroad, including users in Cuba.

Another key point in relation to the overall themes of this thesis is that the newspapers analysed above struggle between transnational and national/local ambitions. For *Diario* this plays out in difficulties of advertising revenue. It also shows in the segmentation of the print edition. For *El Nuevo Herald* it means dealing with Cuban issues but not to such a great extent that other Hispanics would not purchase the paper. Mending this gap has become somewhat easier with the emergence of the internet, though strategic decision on the mission of the printed edition and the paper in general remain. For some exile journalists, a local/national approach is a starting point for their professional identity, but their wish to contribute and provide information for the Cubans on the island potentially clashes with Anglo journalistic ethics and values.

*El Nuevo Herald* and *The Miami Herald* provide a forum for discussion as well as a source of friction in themselves. Sites of conflict taking place in the media are diverse and complex, very often concerning political issues. Even issues which have a minor political dimension are politicised. The press provides a site of conflict in terms of its content, on the micro-level of the articles, but also as an institution it is often criticised on a macro-level.

An underlying theme these sites of conflict have in common is the notion of ‘them’ and ‘us’. Despite the fact that second and third generation Cuban-Americans have actually never lived or visited Cuba, despite Cuba having entered a post-revolutionary stage, and despite a great number of Cuban-Americans working in both the Spanish and the English-language *Herald*, a strong sense of *cubanidad* (Cuban-ness) combined with an exile mentality prevails in many Cuban-Americans’ attitudes and reaction to the press.

In contrast to the press, the establishment of Cuban-American radio stations was much more straightforward. Nevertheless, some of the challenges, for example how to deal with changing demographics in the city, are facing radio as well. The next chapter will examine Miami's Cuban-American radio scene.

## 5. Miami's Cuban-American Radio Scene

### Introduction

In 1960, one year after the Cuban revolution, Miami was home to three radio stations: WFAB, WMIE and WMET (Soruco 1996, 128). With the growing presence of Cuban-Americans, the number of Spanish-language radio stations has seen a tremendous increase. Soruco names three main functions of foreign-language radio in the United States:

1. to preserve cultural ties and heritage including language;
  2. to provide guidance in the new host country;
  3. to provide entertainment and reduce feelings of isolation.
- (1996, 36-37)

In addition to these functions, it will be argued here that Spanish-language radio in Miami has had a strong ideological component that emphasized the assumed homogeneity of the political stance of the Cuban exile community. James Carey proposed that communication can be viewed as a ritualistic process that sustains 'a presentation of reality that gives life an overall form, order, and tone' (1989, 21). Communication then is more than merely passing on information. It confirms established ways of viewing and understanding what happens around a community. Simultaneously, it thereby strengthens the sense of belonging to this community. Given the significance of radio for the Cuban-American community in Miami, it is helpful to view the output of Spanish-language radio stations from this perspective. In addition, more than other media analysed in this thesis, Cuban-American radio stations fulfil an important role as agents in memory preservation. A great number of shows broadcast by Radio Mambí, which will be introduced in detail below, are a continuous reminder of the historical circumstances of the Cubans' arrival in Miami. While at times being harshly criticised for 'being stuck in the past', a notable number of Cuban-Americans does not question the existence of this traditional Cuban-American station.

There is no doubt that new stations aimed to provide a valuable service to the Cuban exile. However, the increasing buying power of the entrepreneurial Cuban-American community



also made it more attractive for retailers. Businesses began looking for a way to advertise their products, which in turn meant financial viability for the stations (Soruco 1996, 36).

On numerous occasions during my field research, radio was described as the No. 1 Cuban medium in Miami. Even people who are not regular listeners to the Cuban-American stations confirmed they tune in if they want to get a feeling for the general mood of the community, which issues are being discussed, what concerns exist in relation to the former homeland. Researchers as well as journalists described it as a 'great resource'.

Since the arrival of the first exiles in Miami, radio stations have experienced a dramatic evolution. From slow beginnings in the 1960s and 1970s, when only three stations served a very homogeneous group of people, it diversified with a growing Spanish-speaking community in Miami-Dade that encompassed not only Cubans who arrived in different migration waves, but also migrants from other Latin and South American countries. This diversification in listenership also meant diversification in programming and differing political and ideological approaches. It is not surprising that the majority of stations established in the first decades after the Cuban revolution harboured strong anti-Castro sentiments in their programming, then and, in some cases still today, greeting and bowing in respect to their *compañeros y compañeras de lucha* (comrades involved in the struggle against Communist Cuba and the Castro brothers) in Miami, Cuba and all over the world during shows.

Similar to the situation on the island, radio was soon used for political purposes in Miami as well. In the early 1960s, the U.S. government entered into a propaganda war with Fidel Castro. The CIA was covertly involved in developing a number of radio programmes, such as *Voz del Pueblo* (Voice of the People), which were brought to life with the help of Cuban/Cuban-American journalists based in Miami. Cuba in turn tried to block the signals.

The 1980s and 1990s brought new voices to the spectrum. The exceedingly outspoken camp of the hardliners did everything in their power, legal and illegal, to quiet voices which called

for a more liberal stance in regards to Cuban-U.S. relations on a national as well as a local level. However, two or three commentators and hosts that can broadly be described as pro-Castro went on air. Despite numerous attempts to silence them and despite having to pay a price in regard to their social standing, they are still broadcasting today.<sup>33</sup>

In the past 10 years, radio stations have lost some of their influence but they are still extremely important and popular for Cuban-Americans who formed part of the early migration wave. After giving an overview of the historical development of Spanish-language radio in Miami, two radio stations, Radio Mambí and WQBA 1140 AM, shall be examined in detail. The final section of this chapter explores pro-Castro programming in Miami.

## **Miami's radio scene after 1959**

Soruco points out that upon their arrival in the United States in 1959 and the 1960s, Cubans were already a 'well-established radio audience and also entrepreneurs in the making of radio' (1996, 37). Furthermore, radio was the most important medium for Fidel Castro's rebels. Shortwave emissions were used to establish and strengthen the relationship between the rebels and the wider public. Barlow asserts that

[r]ebel radio was the voice of the revolution in the making. Later, in the post-insurrection stages of the two revolutions [Barlow refers here to the Cuban as well as the Sandinista Movement in Nicaragua], the role and scope of radio were transformed to address social needs and priorities. (1990, 132)

Being aware of this context, it is no surprise that the early Cuban exiles were keen to use radio for their own purposes. Programmes for the historic exile in Miami were started by Cubans/Cuban-Americans buying air time of existing stations, until they were able to set up 'their own' stations and provide a service from Spanish-language only stations.

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<sup>33</sup> During my last visit I learned that one of these radio hosts, Max Lesnik, has in fact withdrawn his programmes from the air. However, they were still available as downloads (podcasts) online (Radio Miami Website).

The first station, the pioneer of Spanish-language radio in Miami, was *La Fabulosa* (*The Fabulous One*). This station no longer exists. The second was *La Cubanísima* (*The Most Cuban*), today known as *WQBA 1140 AM – La Voz de Miami*, a highly successful station that will be discussed in more detail below. The third station to join them was *La Cadena Azul* (The Blue Network). *La Cadena Azul* was named after a station that exists in Cuba, a rather common practice when it comes to naming not only stations but also individual programmes. Daniel Morcate, who began his career as a journalist for *La Cadena Azul* in 1979, described the Cuba coverage in those early years as simplistic and unchallenging. The listenership was a very homogeneous group, with a keen interest in all things Cuban, especially regarding the Cuba-U.S. relationship.

The type of coverage favoured by the majority of Spanish-language radio journalists was, however, not unquestioned. Similar to the criticism brought forward by some journalists today, those in charge favoured the views of the right-wing of the exile. Whether this stems from true political conviction or from a marketing decision remains hard to judge – then and now.

I know that there were some people that wanted to work in radio stations, in Cuban-American radio stations, and were kind of frustrated because they thought that they were not free enough to express their views, their opinions, to do the kind of journalism that they wanted to do. But I always felt that it was a little bit of an excuse; people that were probably unwilling to compromise, to make adjustments, and who simply wanted to prevail in their points of view. That is not to say that there weren't some major injustices committed to some people who probably just wanted to express their views. But I think that used to happen a lot in those days. Especially in talk-shows, the so-called open microphone programmes. People call in, sometimes people whose names you could recognise because they were a columnist of a newspaper or maybe a sociologist who probably had some sympathies towards the Cuban government and these people were, I would say, almost systematically excluded at the time. (Daniel Morcate, January 2007)

Hence, exclusion of pro-Castro views and any position that would challenge the hardline approach to Cuba was achieved not only through non-recruitment of certain journalists, it was also difficult for listeners with differing political views to comment and get their voices

heard on air. Whether knowingly or unconsciously, the enforced creation of ideological homogeneity was a task that the early local radio stations took very seriously. Some stations, especially Radio Mambí, still do so up to this day and are forming a significant part in the cultural expressions that keep the exile mentality alive.

The focus of programming clearly lay on political developments on the island. In the early 1960s, most listeners still believed in a rapid return to the homeland, so every development, every action of Fidel Castro and his supporters was under intense scrutiny. In addition to a close connection to their country of origin, programs were intended to help the exiles, especially the constant stream of new arrivals, to adjust to life in the United States, re-unite families and provide useful information that would ease the transition. By performing these tasks, they furthermore nourished a mainstream understanding and interpretation of history and Cuban-American identity. A young Cuban-American interviewee underlined this assumed and reinforced homogeneous outlook in the following words:

We were all taught from an early age: ‘This is Cuba. This is what happened. Government bad, democracy good.’ Instead of learning the ABC you learn that.  
(Interviewee, October 2008)

In spite of a continuous influx of Cubans leaving the island to join members of their families in Miami throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the Cuban-American community in Miami had remained relatively uniform in regard to their social capital, their education and their ethnicity. The simplistic approach to programming and reporting on local issues, development on the island as well as Cuban-American relations remained largely unchallenged until 1980, the year of the Mariel Boatlift.

The arrival of an estimated 124,000 migrants between early April and October caused major disruptions to Miami-Dade county. The Mariel exodus changed not only the Cuba coverage. It also meant a re-thinking of the role and function of Miami’s Spanish-language stations and the mission of journalists. As Mariel coincided with another migration wave of several

thousand Haitians,<sup>34</sup> social challenges and an increasingly diverse community and audience called for each English- as well as Spanish-language journalist to reassess their position and their work:

That episode of U.S. and Cuban history really changed the way the coverage was done. Because at that time everybody who was working for the press or radio stations had to develop a mission to try to implore that issue which had brought up all kinds of social challenges to this particular community and for the State of Florida. And we had, we had to be part of that. Our coverage became, I think, a little bit more sophisticated at the time. (Daniel Morcate, January 2007)

Mariel also led to the first of many conflicts between *The Miami Herald* and the Spanish-language radio stations. As discussed in chapter 5, the *Herald* displayed very critical coverage of the Mariel Boatlift and the consequences it had for Miami, showing little understanding of the Cuban exiles' wish to bring as many relatives as possible to the United States, even if it meant having to accept so-called 'anti-socials' on board to cross the Florida Straits (Portes and Stepick 1993). Coverage by the *Herald* also underlined anti-Cuban sentiments that were prevalent after the full extent of Mariel became apparent. The conflict between *The Herald* and the Spanish-language radio stations was an indication and reflection of deteriorating community relations between the Anglos and the Cuban-Americans:

At the beginning, Cubans were welcome, you know, with open arms by government, by the private sector, by all sectors in this particular community. But I think the Mariel boatlift really changed this dramatically. And everybody who was working in the news had to make a judgement. (Interviewee, January 2007)

The diversification of the Spanish-language community has ultimately led to a higher quality of programming and to a more open-minded leadership in most of Miami's radio stations which exist today. A wider approach is taken to news and entertainment, journalists and management being well aware that the times of a homogeneous listenership are numbered.

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<sup>34</sup> Alex Stepick III (1992) provides a thorough analysis of the situation of Haitian migrants. In many aspects, the challenges of Haitian wanting to enter the United States stand in stark contrast to the fortunes many Cuban migrants have experienced. This is partly due to a legislative bias against Haitian as well as misconceptions of those communities already based in Miami.

Apart from Radio Mambí, which markets itself as *the* Cuban radio station, Spanish-language stations make an effort to cater to all Spanish-language listeners, although opinions on this may differ significantly due to individual taste. One interviewee saw no difference between WQBA and Radio Mambí. Others would often not be aware which station they were actually listening to, as they consumed it mostly as a background medium. All the younger people I met during field work emphasised they were aware of the Cuban-American stations only because their parents and grandparents would listen to them. Talk radio did not appeal to them and a number of Cuban-American graduates and university students would make the point that as a community, they would like to move beyond the discourse that is associated with programmes on Radio Mambí. That is not to say that they necessarily disagreed with the opinions voiced, but the way discussions were led.

## **Miami stations**

The following paragraphs examine two radio stations, Radio Mambí and WQBA, and a few of the better-known presenters and talk hosts in Miami. Radio Mambí and WQBA have been selected for closer scrutiny as the stations and their presenters and hosts were estimated by interviewees to be highly influential and popular. Due to the established power structures, later migration waves did not instigate drastic changes in the frameworks of collective memory of the historic exiles and their descendants. A Cuban-American journalist describes today's media scene in the following way:

The demographics of the community here have changed a lot. The people that have an influence in the media, for example in radio – radio is very strong here – are mainly from the historic generation. With ‘historic’ I mean people who came here in the 1960s and 70s. They dominate the scene. (Interviewee, June 2006)

The power structure of the historic exile therefore allowed for the continuous affirmation of the static memory and left later arrivals little chance to challenge, change or contribute to these collective memories in the existing channels. In the long-run, new waves of Cuban migrants led to a diversification in Spanish-language stations. The establishment of new

networks was made economically viable with Miami quickly developing into a magnet for other Latin American migrants.

## **Radio Mambí**

While other radio stations evolved, opened up to new, i.e. non-Cuban-American, issues and adjusted to a changing demographics and a listenership with an ideologically heterogeneous outlook on politics, Radio Mambí remained ‘the Cuban station’. In addition to being Cuban, it is also the most controversial of all the stations that exist in Miami today. The majority of Radio Mambí journalists belong to the camp of hardliners. The station strongly criticises and condemns every move towards a dialogue with the Cuban government or, for instance, the lifting of the trade embargo.

Radio Mambí went on air for the first time in October 1985. Originally an English-language station, it was bought by a group of Cuban-American businessmen to create Radio Mambí – *La Grande* (The Great One) (Veciana-Suarez 1987, 81). The station now forms part of the Univision Group.

All of the people interviewed for this research project argued that Radio Mambí was aimed at the historic exile, Cuban-Americans over the age of 60. The only exception was Ninoska Pérez Castellón who works for Radio Mambí. She strongly emphasised that it is not only older people who do tune in and that the exile is not in any way losing its momentum in regard to political decisiveness when it comes to combating Fidel Castro’s government.

Radio Mambí is the highest rated station in South Florida, even higher than the English-speaking. They always love to say it’s old people that listen to Cuban radio. But it is not true. There are surveys that show there are a lot of younger people that listen to the station. Also, we are a station that has a lot of programmes based on callers, call-ins. A lot of young people call too. They always love to picture Miami... Miami is like a magnet for all these theses [theories]: the old exile is dying. Excuse me!? Are their children or grandchildren or nieces... and all of these people who come from Cuba now will become citizens and politics will change. No, that is not true. All of these people that come from Cuba, even from Mariel, if you listen to them talk now – and I

never listen to the people on the radio, I am out on the street, and people know me and talk to me – they have the same concept of putting an end to a system that has caused them their misery, and family division and repression in Cuba.<sup>35</sup> (Ninoska Pérez Castellón, June 2006)

As one can probably sense from this comment, Pérez Castellón has very strong feelings about everything relating to Cuba. Before starting as a presenter on Radio Mambí, Pérez Castellón worked for fifteen years as the director of the Voice of the Cuban American National Foundation, which was transmitted on shortwave to Cuba. Radio Mambí still has strong affiliations with members or former members of the Cuban American National Foundation. Along with Ninoska Pérez Castellón, Armando Pérez-Roura, director of programming and notorious presenter, belongs to the best-known faces (and voices) of Radio Mambí.

Like Pérez Castellón, Armando Pérez-Roura assumes a very belligerent tone when it comes to dealing with Cuban issues to such an extent that some interviewees expressed their concerns about this level of antagonism on air. Does it do more harm than good to the Cuban-American community? This question leaves listeners wondering whether Pérez-Roura is in fact fighting *la lucha*, supporting the struggle of the Cuban exile, or whether he is a Cuban government agent.

Radio Mambí goes so much to the extreme right that sometimes we wonder if they are truly to the right or if they are agents of the Cuban government because sometimes they do so much harm – especially Pérez-Roura. (Interviewee, January 2007)

Partly, doubts on Pérez-Roura's integrity are fuelled by his past and the colourful spectrum of political views he has entertained over the years; he switched sides on a few occasions throughout his career. A former collaborator of Fulgencio Batista, he was director of Cuba's National College of Broadcasters under Fidel Castro and took a leading role in 'closing down and confiscating the CMQ radio and television station in Havana as part of Cuba's

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<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that the surveys referred to by the interviewee are probably paid for by Radio Mambí or its umbrella organisation Univision Radio. They are not in the public domain and it is difficult to assess whether claims that a significant percentage of younger people are amongst the listeners of Radio Mambí.



nationalization of all media' (Bardach 2002, 104). However, he then performed yet another ideological U-turn and joined forces with the exiles in Miami: 'Then he came over here and said the he was more anti-Castro than anybody else' (Interviewee, January 2007). In addition to his influence through Radio Mambí, Armando Pérez-Roura is also 'regarded by many as the power behind the throne at Radio Martí' (Bardach 2002, 104).

Radio Mambí, whose programmes were described as 'useless rhetoric' that is 'getting people excited about anything and everything dealing with Cuba' (Interviewee, June 2006) by one informant, is nevertheless taken very seriously – not only because of its contribution to the public sphere of Miami and South Florida. The station constructs itself as a voice of the opposition. A voice critical of the Cuban government cannot exist on the island. Radio Mambí has a strong signal which also reaches Cuba. As a station, it has a different remit and self-understanding from other Spanish- and English-language stations I observed.

Radio Mambí – and the journalists and freelancers contributing to its output – speak and think of the station as an alternative or radical media outlet that should be based in Cuba. They argue that because of the Castro brothers' oppressive policies it cannot exist on the island. Furthermore, even very poor people in Cuba are likely to have access to a radio somewhere in their vicinity. With the reach and effectiveness of Radio Martí, the U.S.-government funded station, sitting under a big question mark (see The Martí Moonlighter Story in chapter 4), Radio Mambí can only win by giving Cubans on the island either another option or perhaps the only option of listening to a radio station from Miami. This makes their task even more vital. John Downing characterised radical media by stating that '[t]hey break somebody's rules, although not all of them in every aspect' (2001, xi). In the case of Radio Mambí, they are aiming at breaking the rules and challenging the status quo in Cuba. For many of those involved, this is much more than something they pursue on a nine-to-five-basis: it is a life-purpose.

Just to give one example: Nancy Pérez-Crespo is a well-known Radio Mambí presenter and she also contributes to Radio Martí's output. Moreover, she is the founding director of the *Nuevo Prensa Cubana* (NPC), a news agency which publishes stories and reports by independent journalists based in Cuba (González 2006 and *Nueva Prensa Website*). The engagement with issues relating to Cuba therefore goes far beyond working according to one's professional values for many of these journalists.

Wider questions – some similar to the one's that the Martí Moonlighter case in the previous chapter brought to light – arise around this self-understanding of Cuban-American journalists and the work they do. Whose standards apply to journalistic work? Who is to judge and to decide? Is it fair to describe a station like Radio Mambí as a propaganda tool – even though it is owned by a private company and not government-funded? Or would the term radical or alternative media outlet suit better? Is this an exile community and exiled journalists at their best or at their worst?

Radio Mambí journalists' understanding of their work has led to practices that do, in parts at least, not live up to the standards that the majority of English-language journalists expect from a modern media outlet. This is not to say that standards are necessarily low, but they are 'rather different' (Interviewee, January 2007). Information, suspicions, claims and personal opinions are often not clearly distinguished from one another in Radio Mambí's programmes. The focus seems to lie instead on adhering to a certain ideology that comes before journalistic standards outlined by colleagues in other Spanish- and English-language media.

Radio Mambí forms part of and informs a segment of the community that is strongly focused on a hands-on approach to removing the Castro brothers. There is a feeling that history needs to be corrected; the record needs to be set straight. Despite Ninoska Pérez Castellón's argument that her station also attracts younger listeners, there is no question that some programmes have a very old-fashioned sound and feel to them.

An informant who holds a senior role at a Miami-based newspaper agrees:

The major radio stations are still in the hands of people who are completely out of touch with reality. They still belong to those Cold War [years]. It is not valid any more. (Interviewee, June 2006)

A much more pragmatic approach to the existence of Radio Mambí is taken by the editor in chief of *Diario Las Américas*. Alejandro Aguirre makes the point that the existence of Radio Mambí is due to market segmentation at Univision Headquarters:

The bigger question there is ownership which is Univision Radio. If you look at what Univision has which is four radio stations and a television station, they basically pick one of the four to be the super-Cuban radio station. It is market segmentation. But the other ones go to another audience. There is WQBA, a sister station, which is more aimed at people my age [people in their mid-thirties to mid-fifties]. (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006)

The past years witnessed many stations of a similar nature to Radio Mambí disappear. However, it is certainly a highly lucrative commercial flagship of Univision Radio at the moment and, despite several critical voices which I encountered in the field, its validity remains unquestioned by great parts of the historic exile and the Cuban-American community generally.

### **WQBA-1140AM and radio wars**

WQBA was first set up in June 1966 by the Susquehanna Broadcasting Corporation which wanted to get a foot into the Spanish-language radio market. In the following twenty years, WQBA – *La Cubanísima* (The Most Cuban) turned into the most successful Spanish-language station (Veciana-Suarez 1987, 85). The station was and still is highly news-orientated. Like Radio Mambí, it is now owned by the Univision Group.

In contrast to Radio Mambí and despite formerly carrying the alias *La Cubanísima* (The Most Cuban), WQBA employs a more inclusive programming that is not targeted solely towards Cuban-Americans. This process of opening up to a wider group of listeners is also reflected in its new descriptor: *La Voz de Miami* (The Voice of Miami). Based in the same

building as Radio Mambí, right in the heart of Little Havana's *Calle Ocho* (Eighth Street), the station has a more youthful feel to it. Assistants and presenters are younger in age and easily switch between English and Spanish. Before this renewal, WQBA's predecessor, WMIE radio, had been selected by the Cuban-American community and the U.S. government to play an instrumental part in the propaganda war against Castro (Soruco 1996, 38). In 1985, this role was officially taken over by Radio Martí, which had been set up as part of the aggressive propaganda scheme of the Reagan Administration.<sup>36</sup>

Bernadette Pardo, a host of the popular morning talk/news show, is personally very happy with this development. She tries to avoid talking about Cuban issues as it sometimes 'gets a bit too much to talk about Cuba all the time' (Bernadette Pardo, June 2006). On the other hand she does not think that 'people are ever bored' (Bernadette Pardo, June 2006) of discussing Cuba and U.S.-Cuban relations. Pardo sees WQBA's emphasis on serving Spanish-language speakers in Miami and not the Cuban public on the island.

WQBA has newer voices, 'people who are younger, who have probably studied this profession but at least practised in the United States or maybe in some modern society' (Interviewee, January 2007). Call-in programmes have also been enriched through the advent of car phones and internet radio. Before that, it used to be largely housewives and pensioners making contributions to the shows.

Again, it is worth emphasising here that how WQBA appears to individual listeners is highly subjective. Non-Cubans I met in the field would still characterise it as a Cuban-dominant station. While one journalist praised the station's, Bernadette Pardo's and her co-presenter's interesting take on local news, others could not find a strong distinction between WQBA and Radio Mambí.

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<sup>36</sup> According to Barlow (1990, 127), the Voice of America also 'stepped up its propaganda war against Cuba, particularly in Latin America.'

## Pro-Castro programming

Even though Miami is the fortress of the Cuban exile, and known for the hardliner attitude that is still aired on Radio Mambí today, the city is also home to two very prominent pro-Castro presenters: Francisco Aruca and Max Lesnik.

### Francisco Aruca

Francisco Aruca has completed a U-turn in his political outlook, similar to that of Armando Pérez-Roura – only coming in opposite directions. Francisco Aruca was born in 1940, sixty miles west of Havana. A devout Catholic, he thought that communism was ‘intrinsically perverse’. According to his own account, he conspired with the Social Democrats against Fidel Castro and spent one and a half years under political protection of the Brazilian embassy in Cuba. When he first came to Miami, Aruca joined the *Movimiento Contra-Revolucionario del Pueblo* (MRP - Counter-Revolutionary Movement of the People) but in 1962 came to the conclusion that ‘Cubans with the assistance of the CIA had created a mad house’ (Francisco Aruca, January 2007) in Miami. Aruca left Miami but in the following decades decided that he had judged the Cuban revolution too quickly. He returned to Miami in the mid-seventies and set up *Marazul Tours*, a travel agency that – under the new leniency of the Carter Administration - organised trips for Cuban-Americans to Cuba.

*Marazul Tours* was highly successful but also highly controversial. Many Cuban-Americans had a strong desire to see their homeland and family members they had left behind on the island. However, other members of the community, especially the hardliner camp were strictly opposed to travels to Cuba. They saw it as indirectly accepting and supporting the Castro government:

We found it immoral because we knew the purpose of Castro to open up the country was to get dollars in. He was in a bad economic situation. So here was the contradiction: his enemies are rescuing him from economic ruin. (Interviewee, January 2007)

Due to these opposing views, the local media were not very supportive in explaining to those who had managed to purchase tickets what to expect when they arrived on the island. Francisco Aruca remembers that people were taking a lot of things for friends and family that were already on sale in Cuba. He wanted to inform people on a big scale of how to prepare for the visits and what to expect. In 1988, he happened to come across a community station, 8816FM, which was in financial difficulty. In exchange for acting as a guarantor for a loan, Aruca was given three slots per week to allow him to inform people about conditions of travel and discuss the issue of travel between Cuba and the U.S. He did not have to wait long for reactions to this newest addition to the local radio scene:

As soon as they heard that I was doing a radio programme in Miami, even though it was in an FM station and only three times per week the media [went wild]; ‘Oh, no, now this guy has a radio programme.’ I was not as controversial as I am now. I wasn’t really dealing with other aspects of Miami or other aspects the U.S. society. I was much more really geared to playing fifteen or twenty minutes of Cuban music that was not heard in Miami – because they didn’t play Cuban music in Miami. And obviously the market was here. I said ‘Great. This is good. Let’s play Cuban music. It is a good thing because it is also opening up a more normal relationship for the future where we or others can sell Cuban music’. And then I participated in the rest of the programme basically talking about common issues, what difficulties you have when you travel, what difficulties have been created, what could you do to make things more normal in terms of American government, Congress, approach... The kind of things that are being talked about constantly out here. (Francisco Aruca, January 2007)

This comment by Aruca is noteworthy for a number of reasons. For one, he clearly envisaged then and still does today a different relationship between the Cuban government and U.S. administrations. Between 1959 until recently, the Carter Administration was the only U.S. government that followed a pro-dialogue strategy and showed leniency regarding travel.<sup>37</sup> Secondly, Aruca also mentions markets and potential commercial interests that might arise through more relaxed relations. Musicians and bands that are considered close to or not opposed to the regime, for example the singer/songwriter Silvio Rodríguez and the band *Los VanVan*, will not be played on local Cuban-American radio stations. Thirdly, going

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<sup>37</sup> The Obama administration is planning to introduce new legislation which allows Cuban-Americans to travel to Cuba more easily. Restrictions on remittances are also under review (Silva and Wilkinson 2009).

on air also meant facing the hostility of other media outlets and a group of Cuban-Americans with considerable influence.

After nine months of broadcasting, the power and decisiveness of the hardliners had taken its toll on the station. Francisco Aruca was told that the community radio station which broadcast his programme was in dire straits once again – this time because of him. Depending on donations, fewer and fewer people were willing to give – apparently because of Aruca's output. As a consequence, he left 8816FM, partly also because he had decided that he wanted more time on air. After a brief spiel on WOCN, he founded Radio Progreso in 1990/1. The station is named after a 'sister station' in Havana. Aruca hosts *Ayer in Miami* (*Yesterday in Miami*). He explains that his aim was

to create [...] a method or an instrument that would answer to all this fanaticism, stupidity that in my opinion is taking place here. [...] I'm going to be criticising or commenting things that were said or done yesterday. (Francisco Aruca, January 2007)

Right from the start, the programme was – and still is – a success. On the other hand, or maybe because of that, the station was under siege; it was broken into and vandalised and the offices of Aruca's *Marazul Tours* were bombed twice (Bardach 2002, 118). The wrath of the Cuban hardliners that Radio Progreso was experiencing was even recorded as an issue of concern by Human Rights Watch (Kleinknecht 1999). Further difficulties emerged when local companies started cancelling their commercials due to the pressure they were experiencing from the hardliner camp of the Cuban-American community. Nevertheless, Aruca continues with his programmes – to the dismay and annoyance of many. Not only does he host *Ayer in Miami*, he also launched an English-language programme, *Babel's Guide*, in June 1999.

One issue which irritates Aruca when observing Miami's local media scene, is the language divide. He argues that the *Herald* will give certain information to his English-language readers and *El Nuevo Herald* will give certain information to Spanish-language readers, with

the end result that both sides are not as well informed as they could and should be. As a Cuban-American, he aims to explain to English-language listeners of *Babel's Guide*, why Cuban-Americans react in the way they do because of lack of or different kind of information: 'This is a totally manipulative market' (Francisco Aruca, January 2007).

Through his diverse activities as managing director and owner of *Marazul Tours* and as radio commentator, Aruca developed strong ties to officials of the Cuban government; a fact that makes him even more suspect for some Cuban-Americans. Questioned about whether he would describe himself as an exile and whether he would consider a permanent return to the island, he responds that he is not in exile as he can go to Cuba any time. However, he wants to stay in Miami, because his family is in the U.S. and his presence is required in Miami as he mysteriously put it. Irrespective of his propositions, Aruca's style has been criticised for being not too different from hardliner Cuban-American radio shows. 'People who called the radio's open line and disagreed with him would be yelled at and ridiculed. Many wondered what alternative he was providing' (de los Angeles Torres 1999, 149).

### **Max Lesnik**

Despite tenacious effort to get in touch with another radio personality known for his pro-Castro views, Max Lesnik, obtaining an interview was not possible. Lesnik, now in his early eighties, is a well-known figure in Miami's journalism circles. He was the editor of *Réplica*, a Spanish-language news and entertainment magazine. Similar to Francisco Aruca's experiences, *Réplica's* offices in Little Havana were bombed several times and local businesses stopped selling the magazine due to threats and fears of repercussion. Lesnik's proposals to enter into a dialogue with Cuba and lift the trade embargo do not go down well with parts of the community. Citing an FBI agent based in Miami, Bardach (2002, 111) asserts that there have been many attempts to harm Lesnik that could only just in time have



been averted. Nevertheless, up to this day Lesnik contributes regularly to a variety of left-wing and anti-imperialist publications such as [voltairenet.org](http://voltairenet.org) and [cubadebate.cu](http://cubadebate.cu).<sup>38</sup>

## Concluding remarks

Cuban-American radio station in Miami can look back on a rich history. The familiarity of the Cubans with this medium and the ease of employing it made radio indispensable for a variety of purposes and goals some member of the Cuban-American community tried to achieve. A key point is that the involvement of the U.S. government in the evolving radio scene had a significant influence on how Cuban-American stations developed and how they are still used and viewed by many today.

The significance of the radio stations can be conceptualised as an indicator of the ideological cohesiveness of the community. All informants were quick to emphasise and continuously reiterate the importance of the Cuban-American radio stations in terms of establishing and reaffirming the mood and concerns of great parts of the community. But there was also an awareness that the status quo has changed. Shifts are ongoing and inevitable with diversifying groups of incoming migrants and the second, third and fourth generations of Cuban-Americans and other Hispanics born in the United States. While in the 1960s and 1970s Cuban-American stations could be sure to represent the mainstream views of the historic exiles – with disagreeing voices being systematically excluded – other approaches and perspectives on Cuba and U.S.-Cuban relations could not be silenced from the 1980s onwards.

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<sup>38</sup> Recent work by Lesnik (2010) includes for example a sarcastic commentary of a protest march carried out in March 2010 in Little Havana. The demonstration had been co-organised by singer/songwriter Gloria Estefan and her husband Emilio to demand respect of human rights in Cuba. Lesnik regularly contributes opinion pieces to [cubadebate.cu](http://cubadebate.cu) (see <http://www.cubadebate.cu/categoria/autores/max-lesnik/>; accessed 3 October 2010), a Cuban website that also includes articles and reflections by Fidel and Raúl Castro. [Cubadebate.cu](http://cubadebate.cu) aims to counteract the claims made by the United States about the island and Cuban politicians whilst also bringing to light the various attacks of the United States on Cuba (<http://www.cubadebate.cu/editores/>; accessed 5 October 2010).

In the end, many Cuban-American radio stations were faced with the choice of adjusting to Miami's changing demographic or being closed down. In itself, this might not be a development particular to these radio stations. What makes the case noteworthy though is that younger informants in the field not necessarily disagree with the political stance held up as a mainstream view. But what they disagree with is the way debates are handled on air.

The dislike and disapproval of on-air discussions that have an automatic hierarchy of participants (with the commentator always having the last word and discussions often having a pre-determined conclusion of blaming the Castro brothers and communism) is an indicator of a shift not only in media use but also in terms of how younger Cuban-Americans view themselves as citizens in relation to the U.S. and the Cuban state. The associations of some Cuban-American radio stations with international politics and the early involvement of the CIA seem alienating now. Even more significantly, though, the mere existence of radio stations and the discourse they have perpetuated over the past decades has not meaningfully improved the overall situation. On the contrary, some would argue that it led to violent actions and to isolating parts of the community who did not hear themselves represented on air at all. The power to control and influence the dominant narrative in mainstream Cuban-American radio stations stayed in the hands of the historic exiles and their descendents, even when it was challenged by the arrival of later migratory waves.

This former stronghold of radio stands in stark contrast to how Cuban-Americans relate to television stations, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **6. Spanish-language television, Cuban-Americans and Hispanic Audiences**

### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on national Spanish-language television as well as on local (English- and Spanish-language) television in Miami. While English-language TV stations saw an exponential increase in numbers from the 1960s onwards, Spanish-language audiences were not served to the same extent. Until 1985, Channel 23 (WLTW) was the only station providing Spanish-language programmes in Miami (Soruco 1996, 47). One reason for the slow uptake of Spanish-language television was high market entry costs. For migrants, no matter where they are from and why they came to the United States, setting up a TV station, especially in a time before the necessary technology and equipment became widely available, was not an obvious or feasible step to take. In addition and as expanded on below, rulings by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) did not allow foreigners or people with unresolved status a straightforward way into television broadcasting. And finally, there was still the prevailing hope in Miami that incoming migrants like the Cubans would learn English, making a Spanish-language network superfluous.

During the course of research, it became more and more apparent that television as a medium is by far the most difficult to tackle in terms of the over-riding research question: How does an exilic community use the media to talk to itself and negotiate issues that are of concern to them? Then again, an analysis of Spanish-language television proves very fruitful for the same reason: why is it so difficult to extract a ‘Cuban-American connection’ when analysing television networks and programmes? And if programmes are not concerned with Cuban/Cuban-American issues – what are they about?

As indicated by the title of this chapter, national Spanish-language television networks cater for Hispanic audiences. A Hispanic audience is an artificial, and in a sense a transnational, construct that has clear limitations in practise. John Sinclair (2005) has posited the concept

of Hispanics forming a ‘diaspora in reverse’. The underlying thought is that a diaspora shares a common home or place of origin. In the case of Spanish-language speakers in the United States, however, what they share is their country of destination whilst coming from diverse places. The concept of a ‘diaspora in reverse’ will be juxtaposed to empiric data gathered in the process of this study.

Generally speaking, there is not a complete absence of a Cuban ‘influence’ on television stations and the industry. In comparison to other Latin American countries, Cuba was very advanced in terms of broadcasting. In 1957 Cuba had 23 television stations, more than any other country in Latin or South America; Mexico had twelve television stations and ten could be found in Venezuela (Cuba Transition Project – Cuba Facts – Issue 43 – December 2008). The know-how and expertise therefore existed when the first exiles arrived in Miami. It is to no surprise that throughout the evolution of Spanish-language television in the United States, Cuban-Americans could and can be found in front of the cameras and in various decision-making functions behind the scenes. Nevertheless, because of the importance of markets, advertising budgets and a national and often even international approach to audiences, Cuban-American influences in television are much more subtle in comparison to radio and the press. Television has never been considered the ‘Cuban medium’ as was the case for radio; it has never been given as much attention as radio and a particular station or programme has never been scrutinised by the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) like *The Miami Herald*. Despite a high density of television companies and production sites in Miami, the relationship between the Cuban-American community and the national Spanish-language networks has resulted in dispirited disengagement. A major factor in this process was the reporting on the Elián González saga which shall be used as a case study below.

However, as Alejandro Aguirre, editor and publisher of *Diario Las Américas*, points out: ‘there is still a lot of interest in Cuban stories on TV. There are several TV stations here and cable has brought some more. [...] Even in their international news you will always see a lot

of coverage from Cuba' (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006). It is worth noting here that Mr. Aguirre has Nicaraguan roots because – as will become evident in the course of this chapter – the notion of a channel or a programme targeting a specific segment of the Hispanic audience in Miami or in the United States generally is highly subjective and possibly contentious.

Since the slow development of new Spanish-language television stations in the late 1980s, the industry has more than made up for it with an estimated \$1.5 billion in Hispanic TV advertising dollars for the 2006-07 season (Hoag 2006 (a), 1E). Even in the current economic climate, the total Hispanic media advertising spending has increased by 1.8% in 2008, while the figure for U.S. media overall was -4.1% (Hispanic Fact Pack 2009, 6). Thus, especially in comparison to single-digit growth or decline for English-language television (Hoag 2006(a)), this demonstrates the popularity and potential scope of Spanish-language TV.

Univision and Telemundo are the main players in Spanish-language television in the United States (see also Sinclair 1999, 2005). Their history, strategy vis-à-vis audiences, programmes and scheduling and their relationship with the Cuban-American community will be discussed in detail below. Local channels in Miami and the most popular programmes that were mentioned in interviews and names that kept re-appearing during field research will be examined. The data presented will then be linked to conceptualisations of Hispanic audiences. Finally, the difficulty of some segments of the Cuban-American community with the larger networks shall be illustrated through a case study of the Elián González saga.

## **Univision**

### **History**

The Univision Television Group, together with the TeleFutura Television Group, Galavisión, Univision Radio and Univision Music and Univision Online, forms part of

Univision Communication Inc. At the time of writing, Univision Television Group owns and operates nineteen full-power and 8 low-power networks, in addition to two full-power stations in Puerto Rico, one full power station in Bakersfield and two low power stations in Sacramento.<sup>39</sup>

The company's origins lie in San Antonio, Texas, where the first Spanish-language station was founded by Raúl Cortez in 1955. Cortez quickly faced the problem that programming costs were too high and his advertising income was comparatively low (Sinclair 1999, 97). In 1961 he therefore sold the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) station to the Spanish International Network. This station formed the cornerstone of Univision's predecessor, Spanish International Network (SIN) (Univision Website – History of Univision). SIN and its sister network, the Spanish International Communication Corporation (SICC), were owned by Emilio Azcárraga and five business partners. Azcárraga was a successful Mexican businessman who also owned Telesistema Mexicana, which became Televisa in 1972 (Soruco 1996, 48). Due to complaints about the poor quality of programmes and suspicion that ownership regulation might have been violated – foreign nationals are only allowed to hold 25 per cent of the stock of a communications company – SIN encountered problems with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The problem was temporarily resolved by a new distribution of stocks which resulted in Azcárraga owning only twenty percent of SICC and seventy-five percent of SIN, as there are no limitations on foreign nationals owning a network. In the meantime, SIN had been very successful in selling advertising time to 'reluctant Anglo clients' (Soruco 1996, 48). Its programming strategy was built on films from Mexico, Argentina and Spain and Spanish-language soap-operas: '[t]he result was an attractive package for advertisers: large audiences at relatively low costs' (Soruco 1996, 48).

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<sup>39</sup> Since 1982 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has allowed the set-up of low power television (LPTV) service. The aim was to encourage stations and networks providing locally-orientated television for smaller communities. They can be operated by a diverse range of actors including religious groups, educational institutions and even individual citizens (Federal Communication Commission 2008).

The issue of ownership came up once again in 1986 when FCC administrative judge John Conlin denied the stations affiliated with the network the renewal of their licenses, including WLTV in Miami. The argument made was that ‘while SICC met the FCC’s ownership standards, its relations with SIN, which shared the same New York offices and telephone number, opened the stations to foreign control’ (Soruco 1996, 49). In addition to the close ties between SICC and SIN, the Spanish Radio Broadcasters Association (SRBA) had filed a claim in protest against the SICC’s foreign connection which gave the network an unfair advantage. As Sinclair (1999, 92-120) demonstrates, SICC and SIN were indeed closely entangled and both organisations were under the patriarchal management of Emilio Azcárraga Vidaureta and from 1972 onwards Emilio Azcárraga Milmo, who took over from his father.

In July 1986, the owners were obliged to sell both SICC and SIN to Hallmark Cards Inc and First Chicago Venture Capital (Saralegui 1998, 136). The sale was met with some criticism by the Hispanic community as they would have liked to see both companies in Hispanic hands. As part of the sale agreement, Hallmark ‘made a commitment to continue the stations’ Spanish-language format for two years’ (Soruco 1996, 49). With the purchase, the network’s name was changed from SIN to Univision and a Chilean, Joaquín Blaya, was named its first President (Saralegui 1998, 136). In 1991, Univision’s news department was re-located from Los Angeles to Miami. The move exacerbated the rivalry between Mexican-Americans dominant in California and Cuban-Americans based in Florida. Another noteworthy change was that ‘for the first time in its operating history, local production of programming was emphasized’ (Soruco 1996, 50). Blaya signed Cuban-American Cristina Saralegui who with her show, *El Show de Cristina*, became the Oprah Winfrey of Spanish-language television, and Mario Kreuzberger, a.k.a. Don Francisco, who brought with him the variety show *Sábado Gigante*, one of the longest running and most successful programs on Spanish-language television.

In 1992, the network changed owners once again. Hallmark sold Univision to an investment trio consisting of A. Jerrold Perenchio, Televisa and Venevision. This alliance, with Perenchio serving as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Univision Communications Inc. developed Univision into the largest Spanish-language network in the U.S. and the fifth most watched network overall (Univision Website – History of Univision). In September 1996, Univision became a publicly traded company at the New York Stock Exchange. However, with the acquisition of the network by Broadcasting Media Partners Inc, a consortium including several investors among them Saban Capital Group, in June 2006, Univision’s stock ceased trading the following year.

### **Programming strategy and the Cuban connection**

All of Univision’s programming is run nationwide. It is also broadcast in Puerto Rico and can be seen in sixteen Latin-American countries through cable. Daniel Morcate, news-editor-in-chief at Univision, remembers Univision news teams being recognised on the streets of Panama City and San Salvador, for instance, and while fame of anchors and the brand might be exciting, he also emphasises the more serious side of the same coin:

That really gives us a major responsibility. We are pretty much aware of that. We are a pretty responsible newscast – sometimes too much so, to my taste. (Daniel Morcate, January 2007)

Even though Univision has major production centres in Doral, a smaller town outside of Miami, its strong ties to Televisa, the largest Spanish-language network and the largest producer of Spanish-language programming, clearly shine through in its schedule. According to the PR pack available on Univision’s website, programming is ‘tailored to meet the tastes, preferences, and informational needs of the U.S. Hispanic audience, providing an unparalleled connection to favorite stars and entertainment’ (Univision Website – Univision Network). The main programme categories emphasised here comprise *telenovelas*, News, Sports, Entertainment and Talk. Despite being based just outside of Miami, Univision was often described as ‘the Mexican’ network during field work.



Even though Univision might employ a relatively high number of Cuban-Americans, with talk-show host Cristina Saralegui probably being the most famous among them, Univision does not have strong ties to the Cuban-American community as such. There is no special commitment to the Cuban-Americans and their cause on the nation-wide programming; 'I don't like their nation-wide operation because the programming is totally focused on the Mexican community. It is not open for other interests' (Interviewee, June 2007). This was a common sentiment among Cuban-American informants.

Reporting from Cuba is strongly restricted by the Cuban government and Univision's coverage of Cuba is – according to one informant's assessment – 'nothing to write home about' (Interviewee, January 2007). Partly, this is not just a phenomenon that can be observed on Univision's output or Spanish-language newscasts. A few informants in the field shared the view that U.S. television news programmes are mostly reactionary in their approach and very little analysis and interpretation of events is offered to viewers. Instead, and despite dwindling sales figures of hardcopies, they ascribed a strong analytical and agenda-setting role to (national) newspapers. The fast-paced environment of television often does not allow for in-depth reflection. Therefore, to a large extent the lack of analysis is due to time constraints, on the production side as well as the format. As a European viewer, I even found current affairs programmes to be densely scheduled as certain points have to be covered before the next commercial break.

These restrictions apply equally to Univision's approach to covering Cuba and U.S.-Cuban relations. Still, coverage of the Cuban-American community is an option but it is not a significant aspect of Univision's national output strategy. The most important reason for this – and during field research often accompanied with a sigh – is 'numbers':

[There is] very little analysis unlike [the] coverage of other countries that are more accessible to [...] reporters and which frankly are of greater interest to Univision as a company, like Mexico, El Salvador. But I think sometimes sheer numbers dictate these priorities. We have, for example, anywhere between 26 and 30 million Mexicans in the United States, Mexican-Americans and Mexicans;

whereas we only have a million and half, maximum 1,800,000 Cubans. That is a major difference. [...] Out of all these [South American & Caribbean] countries, because of the sheer numbers of citizens in the United States, there is a greater priority – not [only] within Univision but any network, television or radio in the United States, including Telemundo, TeleDos, TeleFutura, you name it. So in a nutshell, I think [Univision's] coverage of Cuba is very shallow. (Interviewee, January 2007)

On the other hand, another informant noticed a change regarding the Cuba coverage with the expected, and for many long-awaited, death of Fidel Castro. During my second visit to Miami in January 2007, many rumours were circulating about the failing health of the older Castro brother. The news media were bracing themselves for official confirmation of his death and were already working on reports and features to be printed or broadcast once Castro's end was official:

I am not saying it represents a major change in the philosophy of Univision as a company because I don't know if it is going to last after the story really dies out or fades away. But hopefully it will be something that we can somehow use as a stepping stone to provide [good] coverage of Cuban affairs in the future. That is only my hope and I am sure that other Cuban-Americans here feel the same way. (Daniel Morcate, January 2007)

What might have a positive impact on the reporting of Cuba are closer political relations between the island and the United States. This could result in easier access for journalists trying to report on and from Cuba. Still, there is little reason to get carried away with the anticipation of largely improved news. Televisa, the Mexican network that hugely influenced Univision's early development and to this day is one of its main business partners and sources for content, does not have a great record in bringing quality programmes and providing first-class news to its audiences. The media moguls of Mexico, the Azcárragas, have been very clear about whom they consider their target audience in Mexico and in the United States respectively during their SIN/SICC involvement. Their programming is targeted not at the educated or the wealthy but at the middle class, the equivalent of Europe's working class. Even in 1997, when taking over the business from his deceased father, the youngest of the Azcárraga clan, Emilio Azcárraga Jean, pointed out that '[t]his is a business. The fundamental thing, the face of this company is the production of entertainment, then information. To educate is the government's job, not Televisa's' (quoted in Sinclair 1999,

50). Univision is not Televisa, but the overriding links in terms of content remain. Others have capitalised on this prime purpose of Televisa and Univision and have made news provision their main selling point: CNN en Español was founded in March 1997 (CNN Website). The other Spanish-language national network, Telemundo, sees locally produced content as their major advantage over Univision's Mexican-influenced programmes.

## **Telemundo**

### **History**

Telemundo Group Inc was formed in 1987, after Reliance Capital Group L.P. purchased John Blair & Company, a media company which included two Spanish-language stations, WSCV-TV/Channel 51 in Miami and WKAQ-TV/Channel 2 in San Juan, Puerto Rico (Telemundo Press Releases sent to the author in January 2007). At the time, Telemundo Group owned and operated stations in New York, Los Angeles and Miami, allowing it to reach approximately 40 per cent of Spanish-speaking households in the U.S. Due to a rights issue, Telemundo became a publicly held company, although Reliance Capital Group continues to be the company's main shareholder.

What was striking about Telemundo [...] was the fact that it was backed by mainstream capital from Wall Street. Small independent Spanish-language stations in all the key markets were acquired and formed into a network. Experienced Hispanic managers were recruited, and programming obtained from a wider variety of sources than the customary fare available on Univisión, given the new network appeal to Hispanics of other than Mexican origin, especially those on the East Coast. (Sinclair 2005)

The backing from mainstream capital gives an indication that the purpose of Telemundo was similar to that of Univision in that it was first and primarily a business as opposed to an organisation catering to the needs of a specific community or communities.

Three years later, in 1990, Telemundo set out to embark on its most extensive programming launch ever: '16 new programs are introduced and ten others are moved from local to

network time slots. The launch brings the tally of shows produced in the U.S. and Puerto Rico to 54%, or 43 broadcast hours per week' (Telemundo Press Releases, 2007).

After another change of ownership in 1997, the Telemundo Network was acquired by NBC in October 2001.<sup>40</sup> Having entered into joint-ventures with Mexico's Argos Television and Brazil's TV Globo, it was after this acquisition, in 2003, that Telemundo opted for a complete change in programming. The main characteristic that was chosen to set Telemundo apart from its rivals was originally produced content, targeted at Spanish-language audiences in the U.S. In terms of news and current affairs, its journalistic values have been highly influenced by the English-language output of NBC.

Recent developments at Telemundo indicate a widening of its business strategies beyond the Spanish-language television market and the creation of joint ventures online. In conjunction with Grupo Xtra, Telemundo formed two new companies in 2006: Estudios Mexicanos Telemundo and Palmas 26. Estudios Mexicanos Telemundo is working in the production of television content while Palmas 26 has set out to 'explore options to participate in the Mexican television market' (Telemundo Press Releases sent to the author). With regard to their internet presence, Yahoo! Inc, NBC Universal Television Group and Telemundo have arranged to 'combine their U.S. Hispanic Internet properties to form a co-branded Internet business to be called Yahoo! Telemundo (<http://telemundo.yahoo.com>)' (Telemundo Press Releases, 2007).

## **Programming strategy and the Cuban connection**

As opposed to Univision, Telemundo is very keen to emphasise the importance placed on programmes specifically produced for the U.S. Hispanic market. Telemundo's official line is not to target particular groups within the Hispanic market, but to find a middle way that

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<sup>40</sup> The acquisition was approved by the FCC in 2002.

brings in all Hispanics. Alfredo Richard, vice president of corporate communications at Telemundo, explains this goal in the following way:

We are not trying to create a network for Mexicans that come from Mexico, for Colombians that come from Colombia or Cubans that come from Cuba. We are trying to create a network that appeals to Hispanics that live in the U.S. [...] [E]very immigrant that comes here will, even in the first generation, undergo significant life changes that will impact on the way they see certain issues, the way they dress, the way they... everything they do. We believe that there is a market for Hispanics that are in the U.S. that want to see different content than the Mexicans when they are in Mexico and the Colombians when they are in Colombia or the Chileans when they are in Chile. (Alfredo Richard, January 2007)

Despite trying to appeal to the ‘typical’ Hispanic immigrant now living in the United States, audience figures remain an essential point of reference. Alfredo Richard points to the challenge of targeting this audience:

In mass media, you always have this issue: Who[m] do I programme for? And it depends...technology has something to say about it. Now I can programme [...] for micro-markets. But over-all, traditional media like radio and television, you are casting a very wide net and so you are sending your signal to a lot of people. Internationally, you are able to separate into different feeds and have different programming just to adjust a little bit better to where you are getting. Here in the States of course, you can do it because of the time difference. But at the end of the day, you will always be faced with the challenge of who[m] do I programme to. (Alfredo Richard, January 2007)

The above two statements by Alfredo Richard indicate a predicament for Telemundo. On the one hand, it aims to find a middle ground in terms of programming, formats and content that will appeal to as wide an audience as possible within the U.S. Hispanic market. On the other hand, the number of sub-markets within that overall market, i.e. the percentages of Mexicans, Colombians, Venezuelans, Cubans etc., cannot be completely ignored. Mexicans/Mexican-Americans remain the largest group within the Hispanic market and a network like Telemundo cannot allow itself the luxury of ignoring them for the sake of an unpopular middle ground or a relatively small number of Cubans/Cuban-Americans, for example.

So far, however, the network seems to have been relatively successful in its approach, especially with their hallmark format of U.S.-produced *telenovelas*. *Telenovelas* are one of the most popular and successful formats throughout South America as well as with Hispanics based in the U.S. Tom McGarrity, Co-President of Telemundo's network sales states: 'For many years our novela format was at best misunderstood, at worst made fun of. But now our English-language peers are doing novelas. It's ironic' (quoted in Hoag 2006(a)). One of the secrets of success for Telemundo's *telenovelas* seems to lie in bringing educational and informational content into the mix. Characters in the show have to deal with 'real-life' problems, such as obesity, IBS or immigration difficulties that were identified to be of importance to Hispanics in the States. Audience-specific content is therefore one of the main advantages Telemundo has in comparison to Univision.

Nevertheless, a significant number of interviewees and people in the field commented that they found Telemundo's national output 'very Mexican', just like Univision's. Alfredo Richard of Telemundo admits that there are indisputable elements of Mexican-ness:

Our content will be appealing to Mexicans, it will have Mexican actors, it will have a Mexican feeling. I had lunch with some Cuban people here who hate that. They were saying 'It's all Mexican.' And in L.A. they say, 'Oh, it's all so Cuban'. You know, at the end of the day, that is fine. It means that we are not a Cuban network or a Colombian network, or a Mexican network. We try to get content that appeals to all. (Alfredo Richard, January 2007)

After a promising start, Telemundo has now firmly established itself as the number two Spanish-language network behind Univision. Recent data provided by Nielsen Media Research on the most popular programmes between 2 February and 8 February 2009 in Hispanic households indicate the popularity of Univision's *telenovelas* as the table below shows.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> For a detailed description of terms and abbreviation used in these tables, please see Appendix 4.

Rank	Programme Name	Net	Hispanic Household Rating (LIVE + SD)	Persons 2+ (000) (LIVE + SD)
1	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE WED- 4 Feb	UNI	24.1	5863
2	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE THU- 5 Feb	UNI	24.0	5718
3	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE TUE- 3 Feb	UNI	23.7	5913
4	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE FRI- 6 Feb	UNI	22.7	5400
4	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE MON- 2 Feb	UNI	22.7	5426
6	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL WED- 4 Feb	UNI	21.9	4980
7	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL TUE- 3 Feb	UNI	21.6	5105
7	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL THU- 5 Feb	UNI	21.6	4995
9	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL MON- 2 Feb	UNI	21.3	4950
10	TONTAS NO VAN CIELO TUE- 3 Feb	UNI	20.6	4797

Source: Nielsen Media Research 2009

*Fuego en la Sangre* is in fact the Mexican, i.e. Televisa, remake of the Columbian soap opera *Las Aguas Mansas* which had originally been produced by RTI Televisión (IMDB Website). With *Fuego en la Sangre* nearing its final episode, as well as with *Cuidado con el Angel* (another production of Televisa), Univision even makes the top ten of programmes viewed on American television.

Rank	Program	Network	Viewers (P2+)
1	American Idol	FOX	24,941,000
2	Mentalist, The	CBS	19,699,000
3	NCIS	CBS	18,031,00
4	Without a Trace	CBS	14,308,000
5	Dateline NBC	NBC	11,259,000
6	Fringe	FOX	9,828,000
7	Biggest Loser 7	NBC	9,252,000
8	Fuego en la Sangre	UNI	5,746,000
9	Cuidado con el Angel	UNI	4,818,000
10	Charlie Brown Valentine	ABC	4,811,000

Source: Nielsen Wire 2009

This success proves that Spanish-language television is a force to be reckoned with in terms of overall audience share and therefore in terms of advertising income. According to U.S. Census figures, Hispanics (excluding the 3.9 million based in Puerto Rico) account for 13.7 per cent of the total population (US Census Bureau Sept. 2004). Estimates, including

migrants who entered the U.S. illegally, are even higher.<sup>42</sup> Projections of the US Census Bureau see further increases: by 2050 102.6 million Hispanics in the United States could make up 24 per cent of the entire population (US Census Bureau Sept. 2004).

Despite being runner-up in terms of audience figures, the success of Univision is also advantageous for Telemundo. Spanish-language television can look back on successful years and this raises the profile also for the second biggest player in the market. But the above tables clearly show that at least for now, Univision's programming strategy draws in more viewers. Is Telemundo right to assume a shared Hispanic identity or is Univision right to appeal to the largest segment within the Latino/Hispanic community: Mexicans and Mexican-Americans?

## **A Hispanic/Latino audience and a diaspora in reverse?**

Understanding (and measuring) Hispanic audiences is further complicated by their use of English-language television: the majority of second-generation Hispanics are bi-lingual and, even if they are not fluent in English, they might watch English-language television to further their command of the English language. Some viewers also believe that English-language television still has greater resources to provide in-depth coverage, especially when it comes to news and current affairs (Aguilar 2003).

Aside from the difficulty of measuring and predicting Hispanic television audience figures, appealing to Hispanics as a whole is very challenging. During fieldwork it became apparent that the individual communities, such as Mexicans, Venezuelans, Cubans, and especially but not exclusively first generation migrants predominantly think of themselves in terms of their original nationality, and not in terms of being Hispanic or Latino. This might differ in other

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<sup>42</sup> The Center for Immigration Studies, a non-profit think tank, estimates that the number of migrants without necessary documents was 11.3 million in 2007. This agrees with figures that were regularly quoted in the field. Of these 11.3 million, 57 per cent are believed to be from Mexico and a further 11 per cent from Central America, adding to potential audiences of Spanish-language media (Center for Immigration 2004).



locations, but in Miami with the Cubans being still the most influential migrant group, they have no reason or need to seek shelter under the Hispanic umbrella.

In light of the data collected for this project, Sinclair's argument that Hispanics 'form a diaspora in reverse, since a traditional diaspora is the flow of people from one country into many, but these people have come from many countries into one' (2005) seems doubtful in practice, behind the cameras and on screen. As shown above, decision-makers in television are all too aware that the largest segment of the Spanish-language audience is in fact of Mexican descent. The U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey of 2006 concluded that of the 44,252,278 Hispanics in the United States 28,339,354 were of Mexican origin. That accounts for roughly 64 per cent. In contrast, there were only 1,520,276 Cubans. They form 3.4 per cent of the general Hispanic population (US Census Bureau 2006). Given these figures, Sinclair too acknowledges the constructed nature of Hispanic belonging.

[T]here has remained a tension between the collective identities which various groups have chosen and asserted for themselves and those which have been chosen for them by media and marketing interests. (Sinclair 2005)

How much do an Argentine and a Peruvian have in common apart from the Spanish language? Admittedly, they potentially share a lot more everyday life experiences once they are immigrants in the United States, and the common language makes it easy enough to think of them as television audience. However, the main issue with thinking of Hispanics as a diaspora in reverse is that their primary strand of identification is rooted within the framework of nation states – both their country of origin and the United States. Living in the United States and speaking the same language does not give enough ground for close identification with 'the other'.<sup>43</sup>

This holds especially true in the Cuban-American case, as this community was always very careful to see its presence in the United States rooted in the exilic state. One interviewee, the

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<sup>43</sup> This argument is underlined by Alvarez Borland and Bosch in their analysis of Cuban-American literature. In comparison to other Spanish-language writers, Cuban-American literature 'seems to be less concerned with issues of political advocacy than its Chicano or Puerto Rican counterparts' (2009, 5).

Argentine television journalist Teresa C. Cebrian, summarised this notion in the following way:

Once I interviewed Jesse Jackson when he was running for president [in 1988]. And he was trying to get me to understand or approach his point of view [...] that he was going to unite Hispanics and Latinos. And I said ‘Well, you are very mistaken. It is very, very difficult because culturally, socially, economically, they are very, very different. And it is not going to be that easy.’ I mean we see it in Latin America, you know. All countries are very different; their customs are very different. And that reverberates here. (Teresa C. Cebrian, October 2008)

The importance of the ‘national diaspora’ is in fact catered for to some degree by local channels. Teresa C. Cebrian also recounted her experience of living on the East Coast where a reporter working for the local Univision affiliate in Los Angeles, Channel 34, would exaggerate his Mexican accent to appeal to local audiences. Similar stories can be recounted for Puerto Ricans in and around New York City and for local channels in Miami.

Local channels, including gentv (WGEN, Channel 8), megatv (WDLP, Channel 22), Univision’s local affiliate (WLTV, Channel 23), América TV (WJAN, Channel 41), Telemundo’s local affiliate (WSCV – Channel 51), Telefutura’s local affiliate (WAMI – Channel 69) do cater for the specific needs of the local Hispanic community, or rather the individual national groups. It would go beyond the scope of this thesis to look at each channel in detail but it is worth emphasising that a number of current affairs shows, such as *A Mano Limpia*, were often mentioned among interviewees as having a reputation for addressing Cuban-American viewers.

## **Local programming for Cuban-Americans**

América TV’s *A Mano Limpia*, a political talk show hosted by Dominican-born Oscar Haza deals with Cuban topics on a regular basis. This one-hour show is scheduled Monday to Friday during prime-time between 8pm and 9pm. It is usually sub-divided by commercial breaks into four roughly twelve minute segments. There tends to be either one main topic up for discussion throughout the entire programme or a two or three topics are dealt with in the

same show, separated by advertising breaks. Depending on the topic itself, Oscar Haza interviews one guest or moderates a discussion between several. According to a producer of *A Mano Limpia*, Ivette Layva, the show is clearly favoured by the conservative segment of the Cuban-American community. Much to Layva's dismay, the ratings seem to drop when the young and more liberal-thinking production team tries to take things from a different angle:

[T]here is a very interesting phenomenon, which I am part of, that is that for example our show is for older Cubans but the producers are all young people. The oldest one is 43 and he is a person I would consider open-minded. But our audience is not. We are trying to change the recipe but every time we bring an interviewee that is slightly leftist, you can see the ratings dropping. [...]

CL: And what do you mean by leftist – a *dialoguero*?

IL: Yes, for example. This audience is very conservative. Even when we brought Lech Walesa, the former Polish president, the ratings were not good. It is disappointing. (Ivette Layva, June 2006)

Two more local current affairs shows that target a similar audience segment are *María Elvira* on megatv, presented by María Elvira Salazar, and *La Última Palabra* on gentv. Interestingly, *La Última Palabra* (*The Final Word*) is hosted by Ninoska Pérez Castellón, who is a well-known presenter and commentator for Radio Mambí and very active within a number of exile organisations. Gentv's choice of Ninoska Pérez Castellón as host immediately sends out a message as to the direction and the angle the programme is going to take as Pérez Castellón is well-known for her outspoken criticism of the Cuban government and those who want to enter into a dialogue.

The above examples indicate clearly that – at least in Miami – grouping Spanish-language speakers in a Hispanic cluster of belonging is somewhat artificial, and thinking and identifying oneself along national belongings is still prevalent. The saga of Elián González, a six-year old boy who came to Miami as a *balsero* (rafter) after his mother had lost her life at sea, is an excellent case study to underline that sharing a language is not enough to form a large Hispanic community.

## Memories of Elián

The case of Elián González has subsequently garnered a lot attention. De la Torre (2003) analyses the religious associations with Elián's survival while Lauffer, Lancaster and Florentin (2001) scrutinise the framing of the Elián story in three South Floridian newspapers. In the opening pages to *This is our Land*, Stepick et al. recount Elián's story because 'it brought even the most peripheral citizens of the region face-to-face with profound issues of identity, power, and prejudice' (2003, 2). As shall be shown below, even a decade after the six year old was brought to rescue on Floridian shores, recounting the events can quickly add an emotive dimension to a conversation. Elián's story is multi-layered and highly complex. It offers a telling illustration of the divisions between communities.

It is particularly pertinent to the present argument because, to many Cuban-Americans' surprise, the nation-wide availability of information and the (over-)reporting of the case by local, national and international television news teams, did not foster support for the sentiments of the Cuban-American community. On the contrary, the Cuban-American community's image suffered immensely. Many non-Cubans have problems understanding what it was all about, why this boy was of such immense importance to the Cuban-American community and why emotions were running so high. On the other hand up to this day, many Cuban-Americans are disappointed with the lack and reluctance of espousal for their cause that manifested in other communities.

Before developing this analysis further, it is worth briefly recounting what happened to Elián González. Elián was from Cárdenas, a city in the Mantazas Province located in the north-west of the island. In November 1999, the five-year old's<sup>44</sup> mother, Elizabet Brotón, attempted to reach Floridian shores by crossing the Straits in a makeshift boat. There were fifteen passengers on the 'floating device', including Elián and his mother. Only Elián and

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<sup>44</sup> Elián was five when he left Cuba and turned six on 6 December 1999, ten days after his arrival in Little Havana (Bardach 2002, 77).

three others, Nivaldo Fernández, his girlfriend Arianne Horta and her daughter Estefany Herrera Horta, survived. Elián, floating on an inner tube by himself, was found on 26 November 1999. He was quickly brought to Joe DiMaggio's Children's Hospital in Hollywood, Florida. Despite Elián providing hospital staff with the name and contact details of his Cuba-based father, Juan Miguel González, the child was released into the custody of distant relatives. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS)<sup>45</sup> allowed Elián to leave the hospital with Lázaro González. Arguably, this mistake could be considered as the opening scene of the tragedy that followed. INS officials were understaffed over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend. They later argued that 'they acted out of the best of intentions and that it was inconceivable to them that the child's great-uncle would not cooperate in returning him to his father' (Bardach 2002, 72). Elián was forcefully removed from Little Havana and finally reunited with his father in April 2000 after five months in the U.S.

Almost a decade after Elián González was rescued and taken to live with his father's relatives in Miami, just mentioning his name at social events, in casual conversations and in interviews would get people, Cubans and non-Cubans, talking immediately. What is presented here, therefore, are reflections of how different informants remember and make sense of the reporting of the case as well as actual events they witnessed themselves, intermixed with discussion they had at the time of the events and in the years that followed.

Elián's unlikely survival elicited a perception among Cuban-Americans that this boy was a symbol of hope. The thought of sending him back to the island was intolerable and was indeed very upsetting for many. The argument recounted again and again by many older exiles in the field is that Elián's mother gave her life so that her son could live in a free country and not be oppressed by Communist, or rather Castrista, ideology. In truth, the story gets more complicated because one of the factors why Elián's mother is said to have set out

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<sup>45</sup> In 2003 the INS underwent a restructuring and matters of immigration are now dealt with by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (Library Index, no date stated).

to cross the Florida Straits in the first place was that her fiancé, Lázaro (Rafa) Munero, had imposed an ultimatum on Elizabet Brotón to either come along or accept the end of their relationship. For Elián's mother, there might therefore have been other motives in play, apart from wanting her son to grow up in a democratic society. Nevertheless, the fact remains that she died and Elián survived against the odds.

A further argument recounted by interviewees about why Elián became so important for the community was that he could indeed set a precedent. This issue was not captured by many reporters:

[T]here were some issues that were probably under-reported [...], including what he meant, not as a symbol but as a real thing to many Cuban-Americans. If the fight for Elián was lost it meant that the fight for some of their family members who wanted to come over was going to be lost as well. I think that was grossly under-reported, conspicuously absent from most of the coverage. (Interviewee, January 2007)

Considering this argument from the other side, it was therefore extremely important for the Clinton administration to not only send Elián back to appease the Castro government and smooth over tense U.S.-Cuban relations. It was also essential to send out the message to the Cuban-American community that Elián would not be the first of many children to live in the United States with distant relatives while their parents were still based on the island. Elián's case did not only foreshadow a potentially positive development for the Cuban-American community who wanted to encourage more family members on the island to come and live with them. The boy's story also 'reopen[ed] the wounds' (de los Angeles Torres 2003, p. 1) of many Cubans who had arrived with Operation *Pedro Pan* (see chapter 1).

Another issue that was mentioned by several interviewees that did not make it into the wider public debate of the case was the legal argument of *Patria Potestas*, a term that loosely translates to the paternal right to the child. In Fidel Castro's Cuba, according to the argument of those who fought to keep Elián in the United States, the rights to the child ultimately lie with the state. Elián would therefore technically not be returned to his father, but into the

hands of the Cuban state. The Cuban state, i.e. Fidel Castro, would thus have ultimate say over the fate of the boy. Alejandro Aguirre, publisher of *Diario Las Américas*, recounts that this argument was either not mentioned at all by reporters or that it was misunderstood:

What upset me about the entire coverage, all the 15,000 journalists who were here wrote exactly what everybody else wrote and talked to the same three idiots that everybody else talked to, is that that argument which was the basis of their entire legal argument was never heard by anyone. The American government dealt with it in a footnote in a report that was almost 50 pages long. They had a tremendous interest in that everybody was there but nobody was talking about [the legal argument] because that was the only legitimate argument that was there. But the political theatrics were a lot easier to cover. There is a definite before and after, politically and in the exile community. (Alejandro Aguirre, June 2006)

This view was shared by Susana Barciela, a Cuban-American editorial writer for *The Miami Herald*. Even local media had difficulties covering the events adequately as Barciela's following statement underlines:

We only had one, maybe two Cuban reporters during Elián which I think was also a shame. Because if you are a pro, you are a pro. You are going to be impartial whether you cover Martin Luther King or Gandhi. And if you are not, you should not be working for a newspaper in the first place. What ended up happening – and that is very unfortunate – you end up with people writing about cultures that they do not understand. And then you get really stupid stuff and the newspaper looks really dumb. (Susana Barciela, June 2006)

It seems ironic that the largest media event revolving around the Cuban-American community in recent years did not manage to capture what was at stake. It saddened and disappointed many Cuban-Americans that a large part of the Anglo and the wider Hispanic community showed only mild interest and very little support. There was a sense in the Cuban-American community that all the journalist who had come to Miami to report were choosing the easy way out and did not take into account what was at stake. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Liz Balmaseda wrote in a front-page commentary at the time:

Telling these stories [about human rights violations in Cuba and the hardship of Cubans and Cuban-Americans] well may require visas to Cuba and approval from the Castro government. Those are the hard stories to report. The easy ones swell around Elián's great uncle's house, where no visa is required and no government-stamped access is needed. Yes, they may seem colourful and fabulously visual but

they only begin to fill out a vast, textured landscape that is very much part of this country. (2000, 1)

It is worth noting in this context that the main issue that brings many immigrants from Latin and South American countries to the same table is that of naturalisation, the difficulty of becoming a legal U.S. citizen. Thanks to the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, which was moderated slightly by the Wet Foot/Dry Foot Policy in 1995, Cubans do not face this problem. Non-Cuban interviewees and informants very often pointed toward the many privileges that the Cubans had enjoyed throughout the years, mainly because they were initially categorised as political exiles and not as economic migrants. Why should Elián get special treatment? Why should he not be reunited with his father? For many, Hispanics and Anglos, this seemed like the most natural thing in the world.

What angered the Cuban-American community even more was that Fidel Castro not only succeeded in bringing Elián back to Cuba, he furthermore managed to successfully use this case to improve his public image. Once Elián was back in Cuba, Castro and the Cuban state media left the family in peace. Dr. Andy Gómez, a senior research fellow at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (ICCAS) at the University of Miami, expresses his annoyance over the contrasting treatments of the child:

To some extent we have put Fidel in a position where he looked good and we looked bad because he was saying: 'The father wants his son back. Not me'. And Fidel allowed Elián to be totally absorbed by Cuban society. That was clearly contradictory to the way we handled it. Here, every day of the news, it was Elián. There, Elián was whisked off and nobody saw or heard about him for months. Fidel said he wanted to protect the privacy of a family in their moments of sorrow and give the family time for reconciliation. Wait a minute! - Shouldn't we have been saying that over here and not he over there?!? (Andy Gómez, June 2006)

Tracey Eaton, who was a foreign correspondent with *The Dallas Morning News* at the time, covered the Elián saga from Havana, agrees with Gómez's assessment:

Castro took full advantage of the situation for political gain. It was also a big international public relations coup for Castro. The exile community, meantime, came off poorly in the eyes of both ordinary Americans and the international community. Castro clearly won that round. (Tracey Eaton, November 2008)



During and after the Elián crisis, the relationship between the Cuban-American community on the one side and the Anglo and the wider Hispanic communities on the other, worsened significantly and participants were adamant that the media coverage, including images of hysterical protestors, had a part to play in this. Cuban-American artist Humberto Calzada put it very plainly: ‘We looked like assholes to the world’ (Humberto Calzada, January 2007).

Interviewees were split over the importance of Elián in terms of community relations between Cubans and Anglos in Miami. While some interpreted it as a clash that is likely to happen from time to time, with consequences that are maybe not forgotten immediately but definitely no major obstacle, others saw the behaviour of the Anglo community as something that Cubans would not be able to wipe from their collective consciousness in the following years. According to the latter group, the Elián case brought to light a deep misunderstanding or unawareness of who the other group was and what they stood for:

They could not understand that we wanted Elián to stay. It was beyond their comprehension. And it was beyond our comprehension that they could not understand what we were about. [...] But unless you live under a regime like that, you will never understand. ( Interviewee, January 2007)

Returning to previous notions about Hispanic audiences, it becomes clear that the over-reporting of the Elián case did not contribute to uniting communities. The opposite was the case: annoyance and hostility grew steadily. Susana Barciela of *The Miami Herald* has somewhat painful memories of the time:

Elián was a very tough time to live through. I think there was a lot of soul searching. I am not sure if there were any permanent shifts in terms of understanding. In fifty years, you know... It is surprising how it does fade away, the hurts that happened during that time. I mean it was a lot of polarisation on all sides. [...]

There was significant amount of institutional hostility geared against anything Cuban within the immigration offices here. It happened in a lot of other places [too,] where it became politically correct to go around and curse Cubans [meant are Cuban-Americans based in the United States]. (Susana Barciela, June 2006)

Perhaps for the first time in the history of the exile community since the revolution, it became blindingly obvious that the Cuban-Americans, including the historic exiles and their descendants, were perhaps not as welcome and as well understood as they had assumed they were. The community was used to a critical press, especially from left-leaning papers like *The New York Times*. However, they were not used to these kinds of reactions from their neighbours. Having brought so much prosperity to South Florida, they could not comprehend how people they believed to be their friends would not support their cause and – on the contrary – were even getting annoyed with the ongoing protests.

Teresa C. Cebrian was working for Channel 34, Univision's local affiliate in Los Angeles, at the time. Questioned about her recollection of the time, she says:

[P]eople did not understand in Los Angeles why people here were so angry about a boy being reunited with his dad. They thought that that was the most natural thing. Here, with the whole issue of communism, something that is really never been experienced by most of us obviously [...] And [Elián's] family was portrayed as very emotional, hysterical... What you saw in the English media? You saw these people going on and on and on that they were saving him and they [people on the East Coast] just weren't getting it. (Teresa C. Cebrian, January 2007)

Aside from the symbolic and religious connotation that many Cuban-Americans had attributed to Elián, the case also raised much wider questions about what it means to be a U.S. citizen, and why this particular group of migrants, the Cubans, had and still have the privileges they have. Had a Mexican or a Venezuelan migrant child been given the same kind of media and institutional attention under similar circumstances? Is it more important to grow up with one's closest family around or is it worth trading that for a life in a country that describes itself as the 'land of the free and the home of the brave' in its national anthem? Arguably these were much harder questions to tackle in current television formats than showing pictures of a six-year old riding his bike, or playing with his Labrador puppy that he was given by Republican Congressman Lincoln Díaz-Balart (CNN Transcripts 2000).

## Concluding remarks

Out of all the media examined in this study, Spanish-language television in the United States has the lightest taste of Cuban-American flavours. This is not due to a lack of Cuban-Americans working for TV stations but rather due to the business's dynamics and business models, dominated by audience figures and advertising revenue. With Mexican-Americans forming the largest group among Hispanic audiences, the main players in the field, Univision and Telemundo, cannot afford to neglect them.

Spanish-language television provides an excellent example of the constructed nature of Hispanic identity. While Hispanic loyalty might be a common feature in other places in the United States, sentiments of pan-Hispanic belonging seemed to be of lesser importance for the Cuban-Americans based in Miami. The case study of Elián González is indicative of the constructed nature of a Hispanic community. While Cuban-Americans were on the one hand pleased with the amount of coverage the case was receiving on a national scale, on English- and Spanish-language national television, there was also a realisation that other Spanish-speaking groups in the United States and the American population at large did not comprehend their perspective and their struggle. Moreover, national television coverage did not lead to the kind of understanding, a shared sense of (Hispanic or migrant) identity and solidarity that many Cuban-Americans were hoping for in this situation. On the contrary, it led to alienation and brought to light the misunderstandings that media attention, including the reporting of the case on U.S. television channels including news channels, could not counter-act and perhaps even elevated.

The case of Elián González underlines the fact that the reporting of another group's concerns alone does not bridge the gap between communities and necessarily lead to a shared outlook and support. On the contrary, the fact that the case was so widely reported, and at the same time immensely underreported, has led members of the Cuban-American community to question and re-evaluate their sense of belonging in the United States.

Nevertheless, Hispanic television remains a success story from an economic perspective. Much more than in a European context, it is numbers that count. The next chapter will consider a much more individualised form of consumption and production; how the possibilities of the internet have taken the meaning of an ‘active audience’ to another level and have in fact allowed users to become producers themselves. How this has played with regards to the Cuban-American community and their interests, activities and concerns will be examined in the following chapter.

## 7. The internet – an emerging transnational sphere?

### Introduction

This chapter examines the use of new media technologies. More specifically, it focuses on internet websites and blogs, by selected members and groups of the Cuban-American community and others with a strong interest in issues relating to the Cuban-American community in Miami and U.S.-Cuba relations. In comparison to previous chapters, the following pages have a much stronger transnational dimension, especially due to widened access to the internet in Cuba under Raúl Castro, even though this process of opening up is pursued rather reluctantly and indolently. Evolving internet access also does not benefit the Cuban population at large but rather a selected few, while the majority will have to share facilities if they are available to them at all (Voss 2008 and Voss 2009).

Recent scholarship has highlighted that internet use is complex and its purpose, type and frequency of engagement varies greatly between different user groups depending on age, gender and cultural context, to name but a few decisive factors (Lee 1999, Livingstone 2003, Singh 2001, Sooryamoorthy, Paige Miller and Shrum 2008, Cheong 2008). Murthy (2008) emphasises the digital divide that runs along lines of age and social capital: people over the age of 55 and the socially disadvantaged are less likely to be found in online discussion forums, posting on blogs or getting involved in other online activities. Fieldwork data showed that some members of the historic exile group used computer and the internet on a regular basis, but perhaps did not make use of the interactive features the internet has to offer. An example of this was a contributor to a *periodiquito* I met in the University of Miami's Cuban Heritage Collection, who proudly presented to me, the online version of their mini-newspaper. However, there was little room for interactivity, such as readers/users posting comments, apart from the 'old-fashioned' email or letter to the editor.

The first section of this chapter juxtaposes the experiences of two Miami-based bloggers. I will then focus on an organisation called *Raíces de Esperanza* (Roots of Hope) which makes strong use of the internet to develop transnational links between young people based in Cuba and Miami and the United States more generally. Finally, the shift from Spanish to English as the dominant language of Cuban-Americans born in the United States will be related to wider issues of cultural identity.

## Blogging to get it right

Blogs, or weblogs, have taken the web by storm (McIntosh 2005).<sup>46</sup> As Jill Walker Rettberg points out, '[t]en years ago the word 'blog' didn't exist' (2008, 1). Walker Rettberg (2008, 17-22) argues that, like hypertext, blogs can be viewed as a genre as well as a medium. Broadly speaking, a blog can be characterised as 'a frequently updated Web site consisting of dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first' (Walker 2005, 45).

This section begins by examining blogs relating to the Cuban-American community and local media in Miami: *The Herald Watch Blog* and *Radio Mambí Watch*. My initial awareness of these blogs grew out of a shared interest: both blogs scrutinise Miami-based media, *The Miami Herald* and Radio Mambí respectively. However, over the course of this research, I realised that the blogs, the bloggers and their relationship to the Cuban-American community and their motivation deserved further attention. I emailed the bloggers and Henry Gómez of *The Herald Watch Blog* as well as Paul Benavides of *Mambí Watch* agreed to be interviewed.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Estimates as to the number of existing blogs range widely between 2.8 million and 100 million worldwide, with up to 50 million in the United States (Hookway 2008, 93). However, McIntosh (2005) reminds us that a very high percentage of these are infrequently updated or altogether abandoned.

<sup>47</sup> I interviewed Henry Gómez in January 2007 and Paul Benavides in October 2008.

## ***The Herald Watch Blog***

Before starting *The Herald Watch* blog, Henry Gómez, an advertising executive in his late thirties, had been a quiet observer of Miami's English- and Spanish-language media language for a few years. Having grown up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, his awareness of issues relating to Cuba was minimal while he was attending school. He became interested in Cuban history only as a young adult; both his parents were born in Cuba. Gómez, who works for an advertising agency, started *The Herald Watch Blog* after a letter he had sent to *The Miami Herald* for publication had been edited to an extent which he thought was unacceptable:

They stripped out all the criticism of *The Herald*. They left the other points in, which I thought, you know.... You're the only newspaper in town. You kind of have an obligation, particularly on the opinion page. But look at yourself. Allow people to criticise you. They apparently have a very thin skin over there. (Henry Gómez, January 2007)

Over the years, Gómez has become highly critical of *The Miami Herald* and his blog scrutinises the *Herald's* every move, be it from an editorial or from a managerial point of view. Initially, I met Gómez to hear his take on the Martí moonlighter story (see chapter 4) which he extensively covered in his blog. During the interview, it was very obvious that the blog was more than a hobby for Henry Gómez. He was extremely passionate about topics relating to Cuban and the Cuban-American community. He had strong feelings about the – in his eyes – misrepresentation of the Cuban-American community in the English-language version of the *Herald* and other national English-language newspapers, such as *The New York Times*. Henry Gómez is convinced that the paper was not doing a successful job in serving its readers. Gómez asserts that he writes the blog

[...] for people like me; people that are curious to know what's going on inside *The Herald*. People that really want... that suspect that they are not getting all sides of the story when reading this paper. [...] You know our newspaper at times has been an embarrassment. It really has done shoddy things. (Henry Gómez, January 2007)

Gómez also has and contributes to other blogs and sites; they include ‘trenblindado.com – Exposing the truth about Ché Guevara’ (<http://www.trenblindado.com/>), ‘CubanAmericanPundits.com – Thought-provoking essays from a Cuban-American perspective’ (<http://cubanamericanpundits.blogspot.com>) and ‘Babalú blog - an island on the net without a bearded dictator’ (<http://babalublog.com>).

A further reason which motivates Gómez to spend so much time and effort in writing about Cuba-related issues on the web is that he would like to see a wider involvement with the Cuban plight. After lamenting the fact that newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* do not cover or only have very limited coverage of Cuba-related topics, Gómez summarised the impulse for blogging as follows:

The problem is that we are all talking to ourselves and nobody is talking to the general public. That is partly where my other blog and blogs where my colleagues write about Cuba come into play. We are trying to speak to an English-language audience. We are reporting stuff that does not get reported. (Henry Gómez, January 2007)

Over the years, Gómez moved on from being merely an observer to become more and more actively involved in the local exile scene. He has been invited to local radio shows and he is the president of *Bloggers United for Cuban Liberty*, a group of bloggers which organises campaigns to ‘generate a lot of awareness about the Cuban reality’ (Blogger United For Cuban Liberty – Welcome 2009).

On *The Herald Watch Blog*, Gómez runs a small advertisement which encourages people working for the *Heralds* or those who know people employed by the *Heralds* to contact him if they have a story.<sup>48</sup> Gómez confirms that

[t]he interesting thing about blogging is that people start sending you emails and insiders start sending you stuff. They send you loads that you didn’t know existed or things to follow up on. (Henry Gómez, January 2007)

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<sup>48</sup> The advertising on *The Herald Watch Blog* read: ‘HELP WANTED: Watch the watchdog. Do you work for the *Heralds*? Do you know someone who does? If you have a story *Herald Watch* can tell it. Your anonymity will be guaranteed. Send your tip via email to this address: [...] Don’t delay, do it today’ (*Herald Watch Blog* – Help Wanted! – no date stated).



For Henry Gómez, blogging was a way to take the continued struggle of the Cuban-American community online. Blogging helped him – even though he might not have planned this – to strengthen his profile in the exile community online and offline. It is worth noting that within the political spectrum of the Cuban-American community, Gómez leans towards the right, towards a hardliner approach and, to some extent, that explains his success outside the world of blogs.

### ***Mambí Watch Blog***

Another blogger who started writing due to his critical views on a local media outlet is Paul Benavides. At the time of interviewing, Benavides, a graduate student of conflict analysis and conflict resolution, was in his late twenties; he grew up in the Miami area but was born in Peru. His family received the help and support of a Cuban-American family when they first arrived in the United States. Like Gómez, Paul Benavides was a mere observer throughout most of his adult life. He became more interested in politics at the start of the second Iraq War. During that time, Paul Benavides listened to many Spanish-language radio stations, in particular Radio Mambí and WQBA. Taking in the arguments and points made by journalists and callers of Radio Mambí, Benavides wonders where ‘the other side of that debate’ is and emphasises that in his view, even national conservative radio allows for a greater number of liberal voices and perspectives to be heard. His concern grew further because in Miami, Miami-Dade County and South Florida more generally, a significant percentage of the population, including Benavides’s own parents, prefer Spanish-language stations and consume no or very little English-language news (see section on ‘Language Issues’ in this chapter). That limits their sources of information but in Benavides’s view it also means that the kind of information they do receive is extremely biased towards the right.

His blog, *Mambí Watch*, therefore, is an effort to widen the debate:

What Mambí-Watch tries to do most is talk about the influence of some of the most extreme branch of the Cuban exile community – such like *Unidad Cubana* and they are tied with *Commando F4* and how they talk about or continue to spread messages that if the Cuban government is overthrown, that violence is alright. My personal opinion is that we should be very careful when we support violence and stuff like that. And so I'm very critical of that when you hear it on the radio [...]. People supporting violence or supporting groups that will support violence or in some cases supporting positions where there is no other resort but violence. I'm really critical of that and I think there should be a voice that counters it so those other voices are not the only ones being heard. [...] I really had a listen to all the other Spanish radio stations but Radio Mambí and WQBA have such a large audience. (Paul Benavides, October 2008)

Questioned whether he considers an English-language blog a serious response to powerful Spanish-language radio stations, Benavides explains that he would like to see his blog translated into Spanish as well; however, English is the language in which he 'can get it out faster' (Benavides, October 2008). Contrary to his previous argument that he is concerned about those members of the Hispanic community in Miami who only speak Spanish he asserts that many people, even people aged over 55, are able to at least read English. However, the point remains that even with the necessary language skills, that segment of the Cuban-American community is highly unlikely to read blogs.

Despite some similarities between *The Herald Watch Blog* and *Mambí Watch* and the bloggers' motivation to start writing, Gómez's and Benavides's experience of how the blog allows them to relate to the Cuban-American community could not have been more different. While Gómez became more and more active and involved in the exile community, Benavides has kept a very low profile. Reasons for this might be that he does not speak to his friends about the blog, not even to Cuban-American friends who might have a genuine interest in the topics he writes about. Benavides asserts that a discussion about Cuban-American issues is best to be had online because it is more suitable for exchanging views about these kinds of issues:

PB: I think the best way to talk about the U.S.-Cuba issue is in a forum where people know it is going to be discussed. Otherwise it can become an emotional issue, especially with Cubans [...]. You can run into road blocks and the best way

is to have a forum where everyone understands that it is going to be discussed and we are going to have a discussion, a civilized discussion.

CL: And you think this is better done online than offline?

PB: Online you have your space, they have their space. Any exchange is kind of regulated by the comments – through [comments regulation on websites such as blogspot.com] and stuff like that. I think that is a pretty good way. Writing... when you write you're not too quick to reply to say something wrong. Or maybe you want to... you take the time to say whatever you want to say correctly or clearly. I think that's a good way to have a discussion online. That's a good way. (Paul Benavides, October 2008)

In addition to his reluctance to have an offline discussion about Cuba-related topics, Benavides also takes more of a left-leaning political stance. As can be expected, this has led to *Mambí Watch* being ignored by most Cuban-American media, including Radio Mambí, the main focus of his writing. A further point is that Benavides does not have Cuban roots, and despite his extensive knowledge on the issue, would not easily qualify as a natural candidate for the popular Cuban-American current affairs shows on television and on the radio. That said, the host of the very popular Spanish-language current affairs show *A Mano Limpia* (Channel 41), Oscar Haza, is Dominican, so coming from a different background does not automatically exclude one from the debate.

## **Local disconnects and the possibility a transnational sphere**

While Benavides seemed to be rather indifferent to the lack of overt interest in his blog by the very media outlets and journalists he scrutinises, another blogger and writer I was in contact with during the last period of field work, Emilio Ichikawa, was critical of the lack of attention that the 'old media' were demonstrating with regards to online output. Emilio Ichikawa, a writer, commentator and former philosophy lecturer at the University of Havana, has a website (<http://ei.eichikawa.com>) on which he publishes his own articles and those written by friends and similar-minded journalists and commentators. His approach to publishing his thoughts on using the internet is based partly on practicalities:

[The Web, radio, TV], these are a means of transmission and one has to use all of them. I believe that Cuban radio in Miami does not make adequate use of the work we do online. We are disconnected. Neither do they show much interest in

our critiques. Cuban Radio in Miami is in a state of stagnation and those who are involved in radio stations do not want to find out more. [...] For example, they prefer to comment on an article of a national magazine which is about one week old, instead of reading and referring to our websites. [translation by the author] (Emilio Ichikawa, October 2008)

Son medios y hay que usarlos todos. Yo creo que la Radio cubana de Miami no usa adecuadamente el trabajo que hacemos en la WEB. Estamos como desconectados. Tampoco les interesan mucho nuestras críticas. La Radio cubana de Miami está en un momento de estancamiento y quienes lo hacen no se quieren enterar. La radio local es un tema de nuestros blogs y WEBS, pero, como te dije, no quieren enterarse. Prefieren, por ejemplo, comentar una noticia que un periódico nacional haya dado con una semana de retraso, a tomarla y referir nuestras WEBS. (Emilio Ichikawa, October 2008)

In contrast to Henry Gómez and Paul Benavides, Emilio Ichikawa publishes and writes in Spanish (although at times an English translation of certain articles is provided). Furthermore, while Miami's Cuban-American community often has a tendency to speak to itself – as attested by several informants during field work and also pointed out in the above quote by Henry Gómez – Ichikawa enjoys the transnational opportunities of connection that the internet can offer. He asserts that he takes comments by former colleagues and by Cuban state media on his work very seriously and tries to enter into a dialogue, also by seriously responding to articles written on the island.

Emilio Ichikawa's call for transnational exchange and a serious, open and fair debating culture resonates with many younger Cuban-Americans. Another interviewee and blogger confirms the need to move away from blackmailing people via accusatory radio announcements and unjustified or personalised comments. However, it would be premature to celebrate the internet as a transnational meeting place in which only civilized discussions take place. Paul Benavides of *Mambí Watch* recounted an incident where personal details of him and his family had been disclosed and published online. For him, taking an online discussion into an offline environment and involving his family who knew nothing about his blog, was an absolute trespass of etiquette. Observing several blogs and comment section of

various mainstream media over the course of this research also gave a clear indication that posts often go below the belt.

Recent academic work (MacIntosh 2005, Thurman 2008, Matheson 2004, Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger 2007) has pointed towards the potential threat blogging could have to a clear definition of journalistic work and to the existence and necessity of journalists more generally. However, despite their motivation to widen the debate and at times even discredit mainstream media, the bloggers interviewed for this project clearly understood themselves as part of the wider media ecology, as opposed to the next generation of journalists who would make mainstream media obsolete. Even though they appreciate blogs as an excellent form of participation, they have no doubt about the necessity and importance of 'Big Journalism' (MacIntosh 2005). In a way, this also freed them from adhering to journalistic values, such as impartiality, balance, fairness. Even though there was a great deal of thoroughness and background research, the bloggers' aim was to balance the overall media ecology with regard to reporting of certain topic.

In summary, the blogs and bloggers examined here have built very complex and highly varied relationships to each other, to other media aimed at the Cuban-American community and the existing mainstream media. A strong motivation seems to be the urge to 'correct' the debate as it is led by the press, radio and television and to fill a gap that has been identified by the blogger(s). While some use the internet with a strong local focus, others emphasise that the internet gives them the freedom to express their honest view, unrestricted by editorial lines. More so than other media, the internet also has the potential of moving away from old propaganda models and creating a transnational sphere of exchange. This capacity is also made use of by an organisation of young Cuban-American, *Raíces de Esperanza* (Roots of Hope), which will be explored in the following section.

## Re-thinking exile politics – the case of *Raíces de Esperanza*

*Raíces de Esperanza* (RDE) (Roots of Hope) is a student/youth organisation which was founded by Cuban-American Ivy-League students in the North-East of the United States. In comparison with other exile organisations, RDE takes a very different approach. Its aim is to connect with people in Cuba on an individual basis. RDE differs from other groupings in explicitly avoiding an official stance on political issues and current U.S. policy, including the trade embargo. One reason why this organisation appeals to young Cuban-Americans is that its premise is to focus on causes and ideas that unite the exile community, rather than splitting it into tiny fractions. Nathalie Marcos, an undergraduate student at the University of Miami pointed out that Cuban-Americans are extremely opinionated, which has resulted in the existence of many exile organisations. She asserts: ‘I think we need to focus more on the similarities between those opinions’ (Nathalie Marcos, October 2008) Actions that *Raíces de Esperanza* (RDE) identified as common ground are for example care packages for political prisoners – ‘[n]obody has issues with that’ (Nathalie Marcos, October 2008).

Another significant difference of RDE in contrast to other exile organisations is the present-centred approach when relating to Cuba. One informant involved with RDE repeatedly emphasised the point that people in Miami do not ‘know the Cuban reality’ and it is the reality of everyday life in Cuba today that needs to inform the approach of an exile organisation or any organisation concerned with Cuba, not the dominant narrative of collective memories. This type of organisation was also called for by Paul Benavides, the blogger who created *Mambí Watch Blog*. Benavides argued that one of the main reasons why the Cuban-American community had received relatively little support and sympathy from other Hispanics was related to the fact that their approach was too ‘state-based’ and not ‘people-based’ (Interview with the author, October 2008). Benavides made the case that siding with the U.S. government to overthrow Fidel Castro had never worked in the past;<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> This is to a large extent also credited to shortcomings of the CIA. For a recent summary of CIA failures, see Cornwell 2009.

on the contrary, it could be interpreted as a lack of concern for the Cuban people. In addition, most of the initiatives were led by a small group of radical Cuban-American hardliners who exploited collective memories of loss to devise violent actions.

While groups like the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) had a strong focus on big politics, becoming a sizeable player in Washington D.C. and South Florida, the emphasis of RDE is on a micro-level. RDE's purpose is 'bridging the gap between the Florida Straits' as Raúl Moas, a Cuban-American student who is a member of the executive committee of *Raíces de Esperanza* explains:

Overlooking the embargo and policy, it's about connecting with my fellow friend in Cuba; with someone who is 20 years old, going to University of Havana and has an interest in this, or an interest in anything.

In contrast to many other organisation of this kind, RDE does not have an official line on whether or not they support the trade embargo. Overall, this has been a great advantage because it allows people with differing political views to get involved and it also allows members to change their views, if they so wish. One interviewee, a graduate who is involved with *Raíces de Esperanza* and with the Miami-based Cuban-American student organisation called *CAUSA: Students United for a Free Cuba*, admits that her opinion on the trade embargo and on the United States' Cuba policy was challenged after a visit to the island. Seeing the consequences of the embargo with her own eyes and speaking to people in Cuba made her question the hardliner approach that dominates the discourse within the majority of Spanish-language media outlets, especially those targeting the main-stream Cuban-American community. Focusing on human rights violations in Cuba instead of U.S. policies allows for broader support from those, Cuban-Americans and others, who are tired of discussing politics and would refrain from joining any type of organisation with firm political goals.

## **Transnational dialogue and humanitarian projects**

To a far greater extent than radio, television and the press, the internet allows for a transnational dialogue between those based in Miami and Cubans based on the island. As an organisation, RDE has realised this potential. One of RDE's ongoing campaigns is 'Cell Phones for Cuba' (Cells for Cuba 2010). The idea behind this project is to encourage U.S. students to donate their old mobile phones to Cuban youth or make a donation towards purchasing mobile phones. The aim is to empower young people on the island by allowing them to stay connected and build a stronger communication network as this has shown benefits on a variety of levels in other developing countries.

In addition, *Raíces de Esperanza* organises annual conferences that are accompanied by humanitarian actions like sending aid packages and filming video messages for youths on the island. RDE is keen to establish any form of contact and exchange with young people on the island. However, what might hamper these undertakings are the limited facilities in Cuba.

Even though *Raíces de Esperanza* has the best of intention to break with the past and promote their campaigns as apolitical, they cannot comply with this ideal completely. Their 2009 annual conference at the University of Miami had actor and director Andy García as a special guest. Their website contains a message from Gloria Estefan (*Raíces de Esperanza* 2010). Both of these celebrities have made their hardliner standpoints in relation to Cuba very clear and collaborating with them lets RDE to some degree be associated with these views in the Cuban-American community.

## **Internet access in Cuba**

The organisation's success is also due to the expanding availability of telecommunication facilities and widening internet access in Cuba (Voss, 2008; Voss 2009). Following this line of thought, it is with the possibilities of easily publishing one's contemplations and observations online that Cuban-Americans based in Miami can read and view material from



the island that was produced by Cubans who are standing outside of official distribution channels associated with the government.<sup>50</sup> Within this context, one interviewee emphasised in particular the excitement and pleasure he got from reading Yoani Sanchez's award-winning blog *Generación Y* (<http://desdecuba.com/generaciony>).

After the long years filled with rumours and scarce reports often including unwelcome news, Miami's Cuban-American community relishes every piece of information coming from the island that is free from 'official spin' – although that is not to say that the internet, in particular blogs and discussion forums, is the place where uncontested information on Cuba can be found. It is, however, an additional and welcome source that was not available before. Since Cuba cautiously widened people's access to the internet, more information comes directly from the island and allows Cuban-Americans and Cubans to enter into a discussion on a very different level. In return, Cubans based on the island also have the opportunity to receive information from outside the island, although this might earn them the dismay of the Cuban government.<sup>51</sup> Staff maintaining the website of *El Nuevo Herald* confirmed the paper's popularity with users in Cuba.

Within the wider exile community, reactions to the creation and growth of *Raíces de Esperanza* have been positive. Several young Cuban-Americans who are involved with RDE, CAUSA or both, point out that the older generation is relieved to see them taking over. As Nathalie Marcos, the executive vice president of CAUSA, phrases it, the question on many aging exiles' mind has been 'Who is going to take [up] the torch?' (Nathalie Marcos, October 2008). However, even though members of *Raíces de Esperanza* and *CAUSA: Students for a Free Cuba* sounded very committed, there is an awareness that they are facing very demanding tasks:

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<sup>50</sup> Examples of official government channels are: *Granma* (<http://www.granma.cu>), *Juventud Rebelde* (<http://www.juventudrebelde.cu>), *El Caimán Barbudo* (<http://www.caimanbarbudo.cu>); these are the digital editions of newspapers that are available in hardcopy in Cuba.

<sup>51</sup> Information on what kind of behaviour will not have any serious consequences, even though it might not confirm with the ideology of the Cuban government differ. See Sujatha Fernandes (2006) *Cuba Represent* for an account of criticism of the status quo which is acknowledged yet 'overlooked' by the Cuban government.

It takes a lot to be involved in this cause. It is a frustrating thing. It is a very challenging thing. And I think that the answer or the solution is not only way ahead but it will be a long process as well. It's not something [where] we will find a cure or something so quickly that it will just disseminate. It is going to be a process and it's going to be an issue... it's almost like a life-long journey and to get someone engaged in that requires a lot of faith and a lot of dedication to that. (Nathalie Marcos, October 2008)

To conclude this section, it is worth noting that estimating the success of organisations like *Raíces de Esperanza*, or any other exile organisation for that matter, is extremely difficult. How these organisations and their efforts are perceived in Cuba and how much of a difference they make on the ground would have to be established through research activities on the island. However, that in itself might prove an intricate task, given the nature of state power and citizen surveillance. Interviewees in Miami mentioned video conferences with opposition leaders and 'work' with dissidents as part of their engagement, but were – to protect those associates based in Cuba – reluctant to go into great detail.

Apart from taking a different perspective from their parents' and grandparents' generations when it comes to engagement with the island, young Cuban-Americans interviewees emphasised their desire to make some form of a contribution to the cause or *la lucha* (the struggle).<sup>52</sup> This desire drives many in the exile community; the waiting – even if it takes a life-time – has to be filled with some form of activity. From all over the world exiled Cubans send materials like books, old postcards, bulletins to the Cuban-Heritage Collection or even deliver their treasures in person, because of a desire 'to do something' for Cuba.

During some conversations in Miami, the lingering fear that it was all for nothing shone clearly through. Despite organisations like *Raíces de Esperanza*, first and second generations of exiles have aged and died in Miami and cultural change is imminent. A great indicator for the slow yet continuous Americanisation of the exile is language itself.

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<sup>52</sup> Younger informants are of course familiar with terms like *la lucha*. However, my observation in the field was that, if they use it all, it is to a much lesser degree than older Cuban-Americans. Furthermore, this is not terminology to be found in official communiqués from *Raíces de Esperanza* which contain a discourse coming from a humanitarian aid perspective.

## **The language question: Spanish or English?**

Miami is a bilingual city. Professional success comes easier for those who speak both English and Spanish. In relation to the generational shifts in media use and individual as well as group identities, one has to emphasise the importance of an accompanying shift in the dominant language, from Spanish to English. All of my informants who were born in the United States preferred English when consuming media, though Spanish would often be spoken at home. This is underlined by the US Census Bureau according to whose statistics Cuban-American households where Spanish is spoken, although household members speak English very well, amounts to 42.7%. Slightly more households, 43.2%, speak Spanish but household members do not have a very good command of the English language. Only a small percentage, 14.1%, speak only English at home (US Census Bureau 2007).

Language is a source for as well as a symptom of a much deeper cultural and generational change, as one interviewee underlined: 'I'm more American than my parents. And my parents are more American than my grandparents. So you lose a little bit every time' (Interviewee, October 2008). This process, the adoption of English as their primary and dominant language by Cuban-Americans raised in the United States, is counter-acted by the preference for Spanish by incoming migrants, especially those migrants, who arrive in the U.S. as adults with no interest in undergoing further education in the States and are not urgently required to learn English or improve their English-language skills. With regard to the over-all demographic composition of the Cuban-American community, the majority (64.8%) of those Cubans/Cuban-Americans who were born abroad entered the United States before 1990; 24.6% arrived between 1990 and 1999 and 11.7% in 2000 or after (US Census Bureau 2007). These figures testify for the aim of the U.S. government to manage incoming migration from Cuba and reduce the number of new arrivals, even though legislation towards Cuban migrants is still more favourable than those aimed at other newcomers, for example, Mexican migrants.

In the field, Hispanics, with impeccable English and native or near-native competency in Spanish, found their language skills and cultural knowledge which allows them to easily access the mainstream Anglo as well as the Hispanic context, highly enriching. And it would generally be the environment which decides whether English or Spanish takes over, as one interviewee, Alex Correa, a Cuban-American student at the University of Miami points out:

For my academic purposes, most of my schooling has been in English. Obviously my analytical thinking works better in English but then there is parts of me that can only be expressed in Spanish. At certain moments I catch myself thinking in Spanish. Catch us during a domino game... you will not hear a word of English.  
(Alex Correa, June 2006)

While the context decides over the language used in face-to-face conversation, media use is a different matter again. Here, English is clearly preferred by younger Cuban-American who grew up in the United States.

### **Spanish- and English-language media use**

In the field, younger Cuban-Americans and Hispanics commented on their impression that English-language media seemed to offer better quality of news, entertainment etc., which can partly be explained by less funding allocated to Spanish-media outlets, as is the case for *El Nuevo Herald* (see chapter 4). However, a word of caution is required here as the majority of my interviewees were university graduates or university students at the time of interviewing. Their critical reflection of Spanish-language media might not be mirrored by other segments of the Cuban-American community with a different educational background and cultural capital. As the above statistics show, over 43 per cent of households have limited English-language skills and this guarantees the foreseeable success of Cuban-American/Spanish-language media outlets in Miami. All media outlets examined for this research project, including internet companies, are very aware of this prognosis.

Online portals, msn, AOL, Yahoo! cater for the bilingualism of some of their users. They work from the assumption that the online experience of their users is not linear but driven by

interests and interrelations between different types and depth of information and entertainment. Hiram Enríquez, news product manager of Yahoo! en Español explains:

[W]e work as a network because we think a quarter of the users are bilingual and can read English as well as Spanish. [...] [T]hey can go back and forth from one network to another. For example, a user who is reading a story about the election in Mexico in the English-language site will find a link to our coverage in that story. If you are interested in this story and you read Spanish, then it is not sufficiently covered for you in the English-language yahoo site. You can go to the Spanish site and you'll find more in-depth coverage on that topic. It is an integration of networks on Yahoo!. (Hiram Enríquez, June 2006)

Similar to the reasoning behind television output, the main news on online portals is meant to draw in as great a number of U.S. Hispanics as possible. But online media have the advantage of being able to provide more detailed information on specific countries in a few clicks.

If you are in the position of trying to work with U.S. Hispanics, you need to understand that what matters in the daily lives is U.S. politics, U.S. Hispanic topics, such as immigration. But they are also paying attention to what is going on in their country of origin. (Hiram Enríquez, June 2006)

On the other hand, there is no denying that the observed preference of young Cuban-Americans to consume media of whichever form in English will have complex long-term consequences. It can lead to a further diversification and potentially fragmentation of audiences and communities; journalistic work in English naturally has a much more diverse audience in comparison to the closely targeted listeners of Miami's Spanish-language radio stations. Unless younger Cuban-Americans, who prefer to consume media in the English language, actively seek out journalistic work aimed at the Cuban-American community, they are less likely to be surrounded by mediated collective memories once they have left their parents' house. Then again, transferring journalistic work into the English-language gives a wider range of people, including those who do not speak Spanish or prefer to communicate English, the chance to participate in the debates.

## Concluding remarks

This chapter examined some aspects of digital media in relation to the Cuban-American community. More specifically, it considered in depth the experience of two bloggers, who have made it their task to scrutinise traditional mainstream media. Situating their experiences in relation to other media forms analysed in previous chapters points towards the strong entanglement between traditional Cuban-American media and new voices that can be found online. In many ways what can be observed on the net, in blogs, forums, and sites, is very similar to analogue content.

Nevertheless, the internet offers the option to move away from a certain way of discussing Cuban issues that has been very much associated with some Cuban-American radio stations, such as shouting people down on air or calling them names. To some extent this is continued online, depending on which forum one goes to. Ethical guidelines on how to treat fellow bloggers and discussants were called for by several informants. Despite these shortcomings, voices that were unlikely to be heard on traditional Cuban-American media are now able to express their views, enter into discussions and create a new sense of how people relate to Cuban issues. The ability to publish one's thoughts online increased not only in Miami but also on the other side of the Florida Straits. More than any other medium, the internet holds the potential for a much stronger transnational component between the Cuban-American diaspora and Cubans on the island. Young Cuban-Americans see their motivation rise because of their hope for a more vivid exchange with those based on the island.

This chapter also presented some cultural changes that are taking place within the community. *Raíces de Esperanza* (RDE) is built on the belief that it is time to move away from old ideologies and old fractions within the exile community. That is not to say that RDE is completely independent; there does exist an entanglement to other organisations and more conservative institutions like the Institute of Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (ICCAS). However, the idea of founding an organisation that does not have an official

stance on the trade embargo must have seemed revolutionary. It is indeed very telling that RDE was not founded in South Florida.

Even though younger informants preferred to consume their media in English, there is a substantial percentage of Cuban-Americans (over 40 per cent) who prefer to consume their media in Spanish. Media companies are well aware of this and cater towards the special needs of Hispanics in the U.S. market.

In combination with a move to the English language, the increase of digital media has provided a platform for a more inclusive debate. My argument here is not that the debate and the collective remembering of Cuba have completely changed with the arrival of blogs and online discussion forums. Rather, I argue that a more varied range of voices can join in, and can potentially challenge the dominant narrative that has for example been sustained by Cuban-American radio stations as outlined in chapter 5.

The next chapter offers an overview of the main points of this thesis. It then considers limitations of this project and future directions of research.

# **Conclusion**

## **Introduction**

This work investigated the relationship between a migrant community and media. Its aim was to consider how migrants employ media in order to negotiate their identity as individuals and as a community. The Cuban-American community in Miami, FL was chosen as a case study as it turned out to have contributed to a very lively media scene. Furthermore, it claimed the identity of an exile community, or rather a community with an exile mentality.

On a micro-level this study traces the evolution of Miami-based media and how they interacted with different segments of the community. The findings show that some media are strongly linked to particular segments of the community and to different evolutionary stages of the Cuban-American exile community. This suggests a highly complex structure of the interaction between individuals, their choices of consumption, the language they prefer when consuming media and the role different media take on for different segments of the community.

The findings outlined in the previous chapters show that there is a distinct way in which different media, such as the press, radio, television and the internet have related to and interacted with the Cuban-American community. Additional complexities arise through the distinct ways in which different migration waves, different age groups and different segments of the community have reacted to, used and shaped these media.

## **Contextualising the main findings**

The preceding chapters began by contextualising this study within current debates on diasporas, exile, nationalism, transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. The account then moved to reflect on the process of research and the experience of field work. Having offered an analysis of Miami's development as a place and social space, it considered the evolution



of the city of Miami in relation to incoming migrants from Cuba and their impact on and relationship to other groups. Chapters 4 to 7 examined different media organisations and different types of media in detail. The following paragraphs focus on the main themes that have come out of this study.

## **Media and the imbrications of the local, the national and the transnational**

The media analysed in this thesis can be situated at the crossroads of the local, the national and the transnational. How different media do or do not master this challenge, depends on a number of factors, such as their historic evolution, the audience they are targeting, and where they are trying to position themselves in relation to their competitors and the wider media ecology. While early migrant media saw one of their main purposes in providing information for the newly arrived, social media and blogs are now employed to organise humanitarian projects for those living in Cuba. The role media play for the Cuban-American community has proven to be tremendously diverse, with generational and migratory shifts being most noticeable. Over time, the individual as well as the collective relationship to different media outlets has evolved.

The findings outlined in the chapters on Miami's Spanish-language media scene suggest how the development of the media and media consumption is an indicator of the evolution of the Cuban-American community. During the propaganda war that characterised early transnational relations between Cuba and the United States, Cuban-American radio was influenced by the CIA. The existence of Radio and TV Martí confirm that this is still going on today. Additionally, the media's potential contribution to Cuban communicative space is taken very seriously by one Cuban-American station, Radio Mambí. Apart from the internet, radio can be seen as one of the most transnational actors in Miami's media scene. The way it is employed and read by many indicates an old-fashioned ideological understanding or struggle that segments of the Cuban-American community still engage in today. Some radio stations in the field have kept alive a dominant discourse that is characterised by topics such

as loss, victimisation, belligerence, pain and *la lucha* (the struggle). At the opposite end of the spectrum are those suspected of being collaborators of the Cuban government. Pro-Castro programming is in turn targeting the local Miami audience. Still today, voicing views that do not adhere to the dominant narrative can come at a price for the individuals in question.

In contrast to Miami's radio stations, the two main Spanish-language television networks, Telemundo and Univision, see their remit on a U.S.-wide scale. Miami is home to a cluster of television broadcasters but Cuban-American topics are rarely dealt with on national broadcasts. On a superficial level, television strategists would argue they are targeting the Hispanic community as a whole. However, Hispanic identity is not as straightforward as it might seem. This research challenges the notion of a Hispanic community. At least for a significant number of Cuban-American informants, other Spanish-language groups were employed as a means to articulate difference and establish their own special status. The early arrivals of the Cuban-American community, their cultural capital and their success stories meant a close association with less successful groups was an unappealing option for many. Furthermore, immigration, an issue that is of high importance for the majority of Hispanics, has a different flavour for Cuban-Americans as a result of a special piece of legislation, the Cuban Adjustment Act (1966, modified in 1995). The categorisation of Hispanics was therefore seen by many informants as an artificial one. However, this is not to say that it therefore becomes irrelevant. As a marketing and branding construct, it has proven successful, especially when comparing the growth figures of Spanish-language television to those of its English-language counterpart. The large players in the Spanish-language television market are influenced by their partners in South America. Their programme content often reflects this with films and *telenovelas* coming from Mexico, Venezuela and Brazil, to name but a few. A local dimension is added through affiliate stations that might cater more closely to the taste of audiences in the vicinity.

Miami's two Spanish-language newspapers have demonstrated a very different approach in dealing with incoming migrants. *Diario Las Américas* embraced the migrants and the accompanying change of demographics. Since its first edition, *Diario* has performed a balancing act between covering the local, the national and the transnational, with varying degrees of success.

The English-language *Herald* had a firm sense of its Miami-based Anglo readership. Its Spanish-language sister paper, *El Nuevo Herald*, has no national or transnational ambitions for its print edition. Online editions of all papers have more room to play with communicative spaces on a local, national and global level.

The analysis of Miami's local press furthermore brought to light the diverse interpretations of what good journalistic practice should entail, and what kind of role the media should take on in relation to the people. While journalists trained in the U.S. often see objectivity and independence as the highest good of every journalist, some Cuban-American and other Hispanic journalist would argue that their loyalty is with the community and the reinforcement of democratic processes in Cuba (and in other countries) first. The findings suggest that this issue was not tackled by management and those in charge. The conflicts that resulted out of these different priorities, different scales of purpose indicate that it is in the interest of the media organisations and the journalists to address these issues at a much earlier stage.

Clashes of professional identities are not unique to the press, however. The work patterns and practices, and the way different newspapers collaborate and compete in Miami have just brought this to the forefront. Similar discrepancies can be found in other media, such as radio and television, as well. The conflict arises out of the transnational ambitions of journalists which media strategists and executives do not necessarily share.

The internet has brought a new dimension to Miami's media scene. By definition, the internet is of course a global arena. It is indeed used by some for that purpose. Others use blogs and forums to discuss local issues and engage in local conflicts. As could have been expected, the internet is also employed by the press, radio and television. But beyond that, it has given individuals a communicative space that was not available to them before. More significantly, it has also led to great parts of the discussion being held in English, opening up the debate for previously excluded participants. The two bloggers introduced in chapter 7 both started their online contributions because of the shortcomings of traditional media outlets.

With the internet being available to some segments of Cuban society, youth organisations, such as the one introduced in chapter 7, *Raíces de Esperanza*, also use it to engage in a transnational dialogue with people on the island. Given the ideological struggle still dominating the approach of some radio stations, this has been a novelty. In contrast to previous studies in which migrants would perhaps engage in a mix of media coming from the host societies as well as their homeland, this has never before been the case for the Cuban-American community. Everything coming from the island would be interpreted as propaganda and therefore dismissed, unless it was messages from dissidents and political prisoners.

Thanks to social media, groups like *Raíces de Esperanza* can operate on a much larger scale. In this case, the perspective of Miami being the centre of the Cuban-American exile community, the place to be if one plans to 'get active' for Cuba falls short. Younger exile organisation or human rights organisations use social media to disseminate information about their activities and events. Once again, local, national and transnational communicative spaces are imbricate.

## The significance of place and space

The outcomes of this study clearly point towards the relevance the local and the national have for a migrant community, perhaps *especially* for a migrant community. Early conceptualisations of diasporas and migrant communities have focussed on the relation to the homeland. While this remains a crucial characteristic of diasporic groups, scholars (Georgiou 2006, Kosnick 2007, Portes, Escobar and Arana 2009) have recognised the importance of transnational activities that comprise hybrid identities. Migrants connect to their homeland, or their parents' and grandparents' country of origin, while simultaneously negotiating their identity in relation to their current locale. The findings of this study suggest an ever-evolving relationship to the country of origin. When analysing a diasporic community with a longitudinal approach, individual as well as collective understandings of the original home are likely to change. Some Cuban-Americans who had the firm intention to return to the island have lost interest over the years, while others have taken the other route and are now planning to rebuild Cuba when their time has come, even though they would probably not choose Cuba as their first place of residence in the foreseeable future.

In relation to theoretical debates (Safran 1991, Clifford 1997, Bhabha 1994, Tölölyan 2007, Appadurai 2003, Beck 2006, Schlesinger 2007) the findings of this study suggest the continuing relevance of the (nation-)state. The United States was clearly recognised as a key player in terms of the struggle against communism and/or Castro's rule in Cuba by older members of the community. For younger Cuban-Americans it was a strong point of reference for their identity: They were Cuban-American; some would even prefer to call themselves American-Cuban as their loyalty to the U.S. was one of the defining features of who they were. As discussed in chapter 1, there have been numerous attempts of framing and defining what constitutes a diaspora. The empiric data presented in this thesis suggests a strong relevance of what could be described as diasporic activities, as opposed to automatic forms of belonging and indicators such as mobility or a cosmopolitan outlook on the world. The significance of the homeland does not necessarily diminish for second, third and later

generations of the diaspora. However, the option of permanent ‘return’ is assessed as a very unlikely one.

A further outcome of this study has been the strong awareness amongst informants that it was the USA that provided its citizens with the possibility to freely express themselves in whichever form they liked – at least from a legal point of view; in contrast to Cubans on the island, Cuban-Americans were not being forced to hang on to a certain ideology and – in principle – were free to say what they thought. This freedom was attributed to the structure, laws and values attributed to the United States. So here again, the (nation-)state and the framework it provided was of extreme importance for the community.

Perhaps in contrast to what previous studies have suggested, the strong awareness of living in the United States and the advantages this brings with regards to civil rights brought forward a rhetoric that praised the United States. It did not lead to a cosmopolitan outlook on life. This might also be related to the time and circumstances in which the first exiles arrived in the United States. The exilic state was to some extent very much linked to what the American nation stood for. The early migrants left Cuba to escape a government that threatened their rights as citizens. Due to the historic context of migrants arriving in 1959 and the 1960s, reclaiming their homeland was initially meant to happen with the help of the United States.

The notion of ‘reclaiming Cuba’ interlinks with choosing Miami and South Florida as adopted homes. The choice is a message in itself. Living in Miami, living right on the doorstep of Castro’s Cuba, is sending the message that the exiles are not going away or giving up. It was the locale that also had an impact on the evolution of media, especially Cuban-American radio in Miami. Some radio stations automatically took on a transnational mission, also because geographical circumstances had allowed them to do so.

Thoughts of Cuba generated a whole range of emotions for many Cuban-Americans. Most poignant for many was a sense of alienation from Cubans on the island. Subsequent migration waves of those who had grown up as *hombres nuevos*, the new men of the revolution, brought to light the evolving realities of everyday life on the island.

These shifts in Cuban society are likewise reflected in the make-up of Cuban migrants. While early migrants were considered political exiles with high cultural capital, later waves brought a more diverse spectrum of people to the United States. The most powerful and vociferous Cuban-Americans are likely to be early exiles or their descendants. However, this is not as simple as it might initially seem. As quoted in chapter 1, María de los Angeles Torres was hopeful that a new kind of understanding would evolve between Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straits.

Something new may be in the making as a generation that grew up across a divide discovers its other half. Artists, critics, and scholars of the various exile and diaspora generations are sharing experiences with each other in Miami.[...] There is a common search, a similar disillusionment, a common political vision, and a shared generational experience across borders. This reunion of generations does not necessarily have a happy ending, but it has taken a first step toward gaining an understanding of differences, a necessary requirement of reconciliation. (de los Angeles Torres 1995, 232)

The decades of waiting have impacted on the exiles. They have caused many to rethink their position and question their perspectives. Whether or not one is willing to say so publicly, is a different matter.

## **Methodological Reflections**

Journalists, media executives and selected engaged citizens were identified as particularly relevant informants in the field as their professional identity and their everyday work practices interlink media institutions, discourses, audiences and the Cuban-American community. The informants selected for this study are at the centre of negotiation of the role of media for the Cuban-American and other communities. Whilst being aware of the transnational aspects of their work, there remained a strong sense of the local dimension and

their everyday life in general. Many of them had worked for different media outlets over the years, or were in fact still doing so at the time of interviewing. They were therefore in a position to compare Miami-based media in terms of working practices, their approach to the Cuban-American and other communities, their mission, and challenges.

Interviewing journalists and people working closely in or with the media brought the further advantage of bypassing some of the obstacles associated with the process of mediation (Livingstone 2009, Hepp 2010). Sonia Livingstone posits that one of the challenges in doing media research today is the mediation of everything. All aspects of social life are shaped by and interlinked with the omnipresence of media. While this statement generally holds true, there might nevertheless be factors that determine the degree of mediatisation, i.e. age, social and cultural background and education. The omnipresence of media and mediated life was noticeable in the field by difficulties some informants had in remembering which radio station or TV channel or newspaper they were consuming at a certain time. This never occurred when interviewing journalists.

In response to Livingstone (2009), Andreas Hepp calls for researching media in a ‘non-mediacentric way’ (2010, 45). This approach includes going beyond researching individual media and focussing on the broader media ecology or ‘media ensembles’ (46), as Hepp calls them. He furthermore argues for approaching research in a dialectic way by not assuming media as the centre force in social life and processes of change. Thirdly, Hepp argues that ‘cultural sensitivity’ (46) is needed to assess the role media play in a certain context.

My experience of ethnographic work has been that it can meet these criteria. It allows one to view the collective and the individual in a wider context that goes beyond media consumption. It allows the researcher to become aware of phenomena that are perhaps not immediately related to media production, policy and audiences. Cultural sensitivity is a must in an etic approach to fieldwork. However, I would also encourage emic researchers to be



more reflective of underlying dynamics when they are in the field or engaging in data analysis. An exploratory ethnographic approach, as selected for this thesis proved successful for researching a diasporic community that is well-established in a certain locale.

## **Limitations and improvements**

What is true for most projects also applies to this PhD thesis to a certain degree: more time and greater funds would always be appreciated. However, this is not the whole truth. It could have been beneficial to spend more time in the field and to immerse myself further in Miami's media scene. The realities of my situation as a self-funded researcher who was teaching simultaneously did not allow me to stay quite as long in the field as I would have liked. On the other hand, the process of distancing myself from the field so as to not get caught up in political wrangling and nitty-gritty details would have been a greater challenge. The limitation of time thus becomes an ambivalent one: it takes time to write and to make sense of what one has seen, learned, and experienced. But then there is also an optimal time frame in which to write and taking longer might not turn out to be an advantage.

In addition to my circumstances, there were methodological concerns. What sometimes worried me about this project was the fact that I am a white European woman who is largely telling the stories of other white people. There was a danger of giving the impression that there were only their stories, only their tragedies, only their Cuba or that their experiences were more worthy of being told than those of others. As a researcher have I followed the suggested thought patterns too often; have my efforts to consider others been far-reaching enough? Then again, it is revealing in itself that the informants I was targeting, i.e. journalists, media executives and active members of the Cuban-American community, often happened to be white educated males.

Even on a more general level, many of those who had controlled Cuba and had lived the good life before 1959 had climbed to an equally comfortable or higher status in the United

States. I could not help but wonder if the exile had in part been a continuation of Cuban power structures on another piece of land. They had been safely transferred across the Florida Straits and the notion of exile, associated in Miami by so many with the pain of not being allowed to be where they want to be, where their hearts tell them they belong, this very notion has been used as a distinct feature of those who sit higher up in the community and who are 'encouraged' to voice their views. On the other hand, those who are 'only' economic migrants and who did not leave for political reasons solely had a much harder time to make a contribution. Had I, through my selection of interviewees, been affirming that structure?

In part, these are of course the potential pitfalls of an exploratory approach to the field. They once again reflect the person-centredness of ethnographic research and its subjective nature. One informant summarised this notion in the following words:

These are all my opinions, and I think I base them on the observations in the 47 years that I lived here. But no one person owns the truth. Only God knows the truth and we are trying to find it. (Interviewee, June 2006)

Another learning outcome on a methodological level was the use of social networking sites by informants in the field. As outlined elsewhere (Lohmeier 2009) being contacted by informants on Facebook can pose a challenge when researching a polarised field. I would therefore consider these possibilities and interactions more closely and include them in the research methods mix from the beginning of a project.

## **Further research**

There are different routes along which this project could be taken further. Having heard and learned so much about the communicative space of the Cuban-American community in Miami, it would be worthwhile to examine how other communities of Cuban roots integrate media and their identity into their everyday life. This could answer questions about the nature and relevance of transnational links between diasporic groups scattered in different

countries. Do diasporic groups, for example, flourish if they have some sort of central locality which substitutes for the place of the lost homeland? Do Cubans based in Mexico or Spain regard the significance of Miami as highly as did most informants of this study? And how would they in turn relate to exile organisations and the media founded and created in Miami?

It would be equally as fascinating to go to Cuba at this point and consider how people on the island relate to the exile community, their media, the United States and the U. S. government funded Radio and TV Martí. Cuba also makes a fascinating study at this point in time as internet access is slowly becoming available to more people. However, conducting research in a developing country like Cuba poses challenges in its own right.

## **An outlook on the future**

Diasporic groups have been said to spend considerable time looking back, creating imaginary homelands and reminiscing bygone times. While this might be the case, their exile mentality led many informants to constantly look forward. One day, when Fidel Castro dies, when ‘those guys’, i.e. the Castro brothers and their supporters, are no longer in power, they wanted to be ready to step up to the task of rebuilding Cuba. Perhaps more than other places and narratives, Cuba and her history evoke strongly opposing sentiments and reactions. In a large enough crowd of people, one is likely to find someone wearing a t-shirt, pin or hat that shows the iconic image of Ernesto ‘Ché’ Guevara. For some, the Cuban revolution is a potential trajectory to a better world whose failure in the real world can be blamed on imperialist ambition of the United States:

Old habits are hard to break – none harder than the tendency within the international left to look upon the Cuban revolution as a myth to be cherished forever, from afar. I know intellectuals from the United States, from Europe and Latin America who still travel to Cuba as if it was 1968, and come away reciting official positions as if they had been freshly uttered in 1959 by youthful guerrillas. (de la Campa 2000, 124-125)

On the other side of the spectrum are those waiting to dance in the streets when Fidel Castro is declared dead. They point towards the poverty and the devastating economic situation of the country and regard the revolution as a failure.

Assuming the truth to lie somewhere in the middle would be too simplistic. What is at stake is more than an ideological dispute; it leads to the ultimate question of how society can be organised in a way that creates a sense of happiness, belonging and prosperity. It leads us to ask how our institutions should operate and how the individual relates to society and vice versa. In the end, it is these issues that people feel so strongly about. These big concerns combined with experiences of loss, pain and injustices bear the danger of hardened hearts and a readiness for violent confrontations that can potentially go on for decades.

The focus of younger Cuban-Americans seems to be moving away from discussions on a general level and to approach the island through grassroots movements. This has come with a shift in awareness and an acknowledgement that the Cubans living outside the island are no longer in charge. It is for people who have stayed on the island to step up and take a leading role. In 2008, Fidel Castro officially passed over the presidency to his younger brother Raúl who has made a point of putting his military associates in positions of power. Although travel and remittances restrictions are under review, at the time of writing the U.S. government has made little serious effort to work towards comprehensive change in Cuba.

# Appendix 1

## Population by Race and Hispanic Origin

### Miami MSA, 1960-2000

Year	Total	Hispanic	Black Non-Hispanic	White & Other Non-Hispanic
1960	935,047	50,000	137,299	747,748
1970	1,267,792	299,065	186,369	782,358
1980	1,625,781	580,994	271,749	773,038
1990	1,937,094	953,407	369,621	614,066
<b>2000</b>	<b>2,253,362</b>	<b>1,291,737</b>	<b>427,140</b>	<b>534,485</b>
<b>Percentages</b>				
1960	100.0	5.3	14.7	80.0
1970	100.0	23.6	14.7	61.7
1980	100.0	35.7	16.7	47.6
1990	100.0	49.2	19.1	31.7
<b>2000</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>57.3</b>	<b>19.0</b>	<b>23.7</b>

Note: Persons of Hispanic heritage were not separately designated by the U.S. Census in 1960. The number provided is an estimate by the Research Section, Miami-Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning. In the 1970 Census, the identifying characteristics for Hispanics was a Spanish language while in the 1980 Census a self identification method was used. Thus, the Hispanic figures are not strictly comparable over the three Censuses.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 1960. Census of Population, Vol. I Characteristics of the Population, Part II, Florida. 1970. Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics, Final Report PC(1)-C11 Florida. 1980. Census of Population, Vol. I Characteristics of the Population, PC 80-1-B11, Florida. 1990. Census of Population, Public Law 94-171, Florida. 2000. Census 2000, Summary File 1. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. Miami-Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Section. 2001.

Source: Miami-Dade County Facts 2009, 9.

## Appendix 2

### Population by Race and Hispanic Origin, Miami Dade County, Florida, 1930-2020

Year	Total	Non-Hispanic		Hispanic
		White	Black	
1930	142,955	N/A	29,894	N/A
1940	267,739	N/A	49,518	N/A
1950	495,000	410,000	65,000	20,000
1955	715,000	579,000	101,000	35,000
1960	935,000	749,000	137,000	50,000
1965	1,101,500	767,000	163,000	173,500
1970	1,268,000	782,000	190,000	299,000
1975	1,462,000	765,000	237,000	467,000
1980	1,626,000	773,000	284,000	581,000
1985	1,771,000	656,000	367,000	768,000
1990	1,967,000	617,638	409,136	967,764
1995	2,084,205	518,967	446,020	1,154,650
<b>2000</b>	<b>2,253,362</b>	<b>534,485</b>	<b>457,214</b>	<b>1,291,737</b>
2005	2,403,472	461,467	497,519	1,456,504
2010	2,563,885	420,477	528,160	1,628,067
2015	2,724,623	384,172	558,548	1,809,150
2020	2,885,439	349,138	588,630	1,990,953

## Appendix 2 (continued)

Year	Total	Non-Hispanic		Hispanic
		White	Black	
Percent Distribution				
1930	100	N/A	20.9	0.0
1940	100	N/A	18.5	0.0
1950	100	82.8	13.1	4.0
1955	100	81.0	14.1	4.9
1960	100	80.1	14.7	5.3
1965	100	69.6	14.8	15.8
1970	100	61.7	15.0	23.6
1975	100	52.3	16.2	31.9
1980	100	47.5	17.5	35.7
1985	100	37.0	20.7	43.4
1990	100	31.4	20.8	49.2
1995	100	24.9	21.4	55.4
<b>2000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>57.3</b>
2005	100	19.2	20.7	60.6
2010	100	16.4	20.6	63.5
2015	100	14.1	20.5	66.4
2020	100	12.1	20.4	69.0

Note: Other Non-Hispanics (excluding Non-Hispanic Black) are grouped with Non Hispanic Whites. Persons of Hispanic Origin can be of any race. Hispanic Blacks are double counted, as Black and Hispanic.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. 1950-2000. Census Population, Decennial Census. All other years, estimates and projections provided by Miami-Dade County Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Section, 2009.

Source: Miami-Dade County Facts 2009, 8.

## Appendix 3

### Persons of Hispanic Origin by Country of Origin Miami-Dade County, Florida, 1990 to 2007

	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Annual Average Change 1990-2000	Annual Average Change 2000-2007
<b>Total</b>	<b>953,407</b>	<b>1,291,737</b>	<b>1,333,462</b>	<b>1,374,106</b>	<b>1,398,974</b>	<b>1,403,983</b>	<b>1,423,697</b>	<b>1,471,709</b>	<b>1,479,530</b>	<b>33,833</b>	<b>26,828</b>
Mexican	23,112	38,095	54,558	38,124	58,966	58,643	43,361	41,942	45,776	1,498	1,097
Puerto Rican	72,827	80,327	70,043	85,362	93,373	92,972	80,854	88,579	94,264	750	1,991
Cuban	563,979	650,601	704,423	695,122	710,937	735,327	736,073	767,349	794,883	8,662	20,612
Dominican	23,475	36,454	49,023	50,349	52,872	65,421	58,372	49,430	48,635	1,298	1,740
Central American	119,534	128,903	190,286	200,443	184,374	170,974	195,914	210,821	201,428	937	10,361
Costa Rican	4,743	4,706	6,622	6,997	1,814	8,732	4,727	7,944	7,045	-4	334
Guatemalan	8,242	9,676	9,183	7,197	12,046	15,234	12,018	24,292	17,843	143	1,167
Honduran	18,102	26,829	43,395	35,172	57,076	44,065	51,588	47,927	49,137	873	3,187
Nicaraguan	74,244	69,257	104,776	124,198	88,588	79,896	95,745	100,258	105,415	-499	5,165
Panamanian	6,729	5,863	7,955	10,224	7,044	5,243	9,844	9,881	7,346	-87	212
Salvadoran	7,339	9,115	17,041	14,421	14,448	16,642	19,914	17,556	12,615	178	500
Other Central American	135	3,457	1,314	2,234	3,358	1,162	2,078	2,963	2,027	332	-204



## Appendix 3 (continued)

	1990	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Annual Average Change 1990-2000	Annual Average Change 2000-2007
South American	108,768	154,348	198,965	222,456	243,526	220,602	237,760	242,196	232,248	4,558	11,129
Argentinean	8,585	13,341	18,870	38,032	25,071	27,545	30,973	25,134	21,120	476	1,111
Bolivian	2,309	2,418	3,347	1,288	2,503	4,458	3,220	1,387	4,847	11	347
Chilean	7,929	7,910	16,214	9,354	17,101	8,956	11,925	13,363	8,228	-2	45
Colombian	53,852	70,066	94,254	95,441	96,936	85,588	90,303	102,118	94,511	1,621	3,492
Ecuadorian	7,986	10,560	7,408	8,522	24,460	19,834	12,705	16,336	19,124	257	1,223
Paraguayan	166	434	723	2,622	1,401	237	857	506	191	27	-35
Peruvian	16,452	23,327	27,048	32,201	30,237	29,916	37,361	34,106	36,258	688	1,847
Uruguayan	1,482	1,829	872	2,118	9,595	6,314	5,277	5,371	6,824	35	714
Venezuelan	9,846	21,593	28,952	29,540	33,147	31,602	42,849	40,981	37,865	1,175	2,325
Other South American	161	2,870	1,277	3,338	3,075	6,152	2,290	2,894	3,280	271	59
Other Hispanic	44,498	203,009	66,164	82,250	54,926	60,044	71,363	71,392	62,296	15,851	-20,102

American U.S. Census Bureau. 1990. Census of Population, Summary Tape File 1A & Summary Tape File 4A. 2000. Census 2000, Summary File 1. 2001 - 2003. American Community Survey, Table PCT006. 2004 - 2007. American Community Survey, Table PCT011. Internet. Available from <http://factfinder.census.gov/>. Miami-Dade County Dept. of Planning & Zoning, Research Section, 2001, 2005 & 2009.

Source: Miami Dade County Facts 2009, 19.

## Appendix 4

Rank	Programme Name	Net	Hispanic Household Rating (LIVE + SD)	Persons 2+ (000) (LIVE + SD)
1	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE WED- 4 Feb	UNI	24.1	5863
2	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE THU- 5 Feb	UNI	24.0	5718
3	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE TUE- 3 Feb	UNI	23.7	5913
4	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE FRI- 6 Feb	UNI	22.7	5400
4	FUEGO EN LA SANGRE MON- 2 Feb	UNI	22.7	5426
6	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL WED- 4 Feb	UNI	21.9	4980
7	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL TUE- 3 Feb	UNI	21.6	5105
7	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL THU- 5 Feb	UNI	21.6	4995
9	CUIDADO CON EL ANGEL MON- 2 Feb	UNI	21.3	4950
10	TONTAS NO VAN CIELO TUE- 3 Feb	UNI	20.6	4797

Source: Nielsen Media Research 2009

Rank	Program	Network	Viewers (P2+)
1	American Idol	FOX	24,941,000
2	Mentalist, The	CBS	19,699,000
3	NCIS	CBS	18,031,00
4	Without a Trace	CBS	14,308,000
5	Dateline NBC	NBC	11,259,000
6	Fringe	FOX	9,828,000
7	Biggest Loser 7	NBC	9,252,000
8	Fuego en la Sangre	UNI	5,746,000
9	Cuidado con el Angel	UNI	4,818,000
10	Charlie Brown Valentine	ABC	4,811,000

Source: Nielsen Wire 2009

‘P2+’ stands for person aged 2 years and older

‘Live+SD’ refers to watching while the show is aired and viewers recording the programming and watching it on the same day

‘Net’ stands for Network

‘Hispanic Household Rating’ refers to the percentage of Hispanic households that were tuned into a programme. Nielsen makes the household percentage the prime indicator for its ranking, not the absolute number of viewers.

## Appendix 5



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GLASGOW

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1. Between 2006 and 2008 I am conducting PhD research on Spanish-language media in Miami and the relationship between the media and the Cuban-American community.
2. Field research in October 2008 is funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. The thesis is supervised by Professor Philip Schlesinger and Dr Raymond Boyle of the University of Glasgow.
3. With your consent, information and quotes from this interview may be used as part of the above named research project.
4. If you would prefer not to be identified by name in the final thesis and future academic publications, please indicate this below.

### CONSENT TO THE USE OF DATA

I understand and give my consent for Christine Lohmeier to use information gathered from this interview (\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_) as part of the above PhD thesis.

I do/ do not consent to my name being identified in the final thesis.

Signed by the contributor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For more information please contact Christine Lohmeier at christine.lohmeier@xxxxxxxxx.xx.xx on +44 (0)7709 591XXX.

## Appendix 6

The following people were interviewed in the course of this project. Job titles and any other descriptors refer to the time of interviewing.

**Alejandro Aguirre**, 12 June 2006, North Miami

Alejandro Aguirre is editor and publisher of *Diario Las Américas*.

**Helen Aguirre Ferré**, 20 June 2006, Coral Gables

Helen Aguirre Ferré is an editorial writer for *Diario Las Américas*. She hosts a current affairs talk show on English-language local television.

**Dr. Alejandro Alvarado**, 15 June 2006, Coral Gables

Alejandro Alvarado is a free-lance writer for a number of Spanish-language newspapers. He works for the PR agency Porter Novelli.

**Francisco Aruca**, 24 January 2007, Coral Gables

Francisco Aruca is the founder of Radio Progreso.

**Susana Barciela**, 20 June 2006, Downtown Miami

Susana Barciela is an editorial writer for *The Miami Herald*.

**Paul Benavides**, 18 October 2008, Coral Gables

Paul Benavides is a postgraduate student and a keen blogger.

**Humberto Calzada**, 30 January 2007, South Miami

Humberto Calzada is a successful artist who is renowned for his use of architectural imagery.

**Humberto Castelló**, 23 June 2006, Downtown Miami

Humberto Castelló is executive editor of *El Nuevo Herald*.

**Teresa C. Cebrian**, 22 October 2008, Coral Gables

Teresa C. Cebrian looks back on a successful career in English- and Spanish-language television in different locations of the U.S.

**Eloy Cepero**, 24 October 2008, Coral Gables

Eloy Cepero is a committee member of the Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF).

**Dr. Olga Connor**, 20 January 2007, Coral Gables

Olga Connor is a writer and journalist. She contributes to *El Nuevo Herald* on a freelance basis and has done work for Radio Martí.

**Oscar Corral**, 9 January 2007, Downtown Miami

Oscar Corral is a reporter for *The Miami Herald*.

**Alex Correa**, 9 June 2006, Coral Gables

Alex Correa is an undergraduate student at the University of Miami and involved with the Cuban-American University Student Association (CAUSA).

**Pedro Corzo**, 27 October 2008, Coral Gables

Pedro Corzo is an author and documentary filmmaker. He has contributed to Radio and TV Martí. Pedro Corzo is the president of the *Instituto de la Memoria Histórica Cubana contra el Totalitarismo* (Institute of Cuban Historic Memory against Totalitarianism).

**Angel Cuadra**, 29 January 2007, West Miami

Angel Cuadra is a poet and freelance writer for *Diario Las Américas*. He is an active member of the Ex-Club, a group of dissidents who have been imprisoned in Cuba.

**Ileana Curra**, 22 June 2006, Calle Ocho

Ileana Curra works for the Cuban Liberty Council (CLC).

**Esperanza de Varona**, 18 January 2007, Coral Gables

Esperanza de Varona is the director of the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC) at the University of Miami.

**Hiram Enríquez**, 26 June 2006, Coral Gables

Hiram Enríquez is a news product manager for Yahoo!.

**Fernando Figueredo**, 5 June 2006, Coral Gables

Fernando Figueredo holds a senior role for the Miami office of the PR agency Porter Novelli.

**Stephanie Fojo**, 31 January 2007, Coral Gables

Stephanie Fojo is the president of the *Federación de Estudiantes Cubanos* and a final year undergraduate student at the University of Miami.

**Gustavo Godoy**, 17 January 2007, Brickell

Gustavo Godoy looks back on a successful career in a variety of media, including Spanish-language television. He is editor of *Vista Magazine*.

**Dr. Andy Gómez**, 9 June 2006, Coral Gables

Andy Gómez is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Cuban and Cuban-American Studies.

**Henry Gómez**, 23 January 2007, Coral Gables

Henry Gómez works for an advertising agency. He is a keen blogger.

**Gladys Gómez-Rossié**, 21 October 2008, Coral Gables

Gladys Gómez-Rossié is the community relations coordinator in the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC) at the University of Miami.

**Ivette Leyva**, 16 June 2006, South Miami

Ivette Leyva works for AméricaTV (Channel 41). She is a freelance commentator for *El Nuevo Herald*.

**(Lauren) Vanessa López**, 24 October 2008, Coral Gables

Vanessa López is a research assistant at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies at the University of Miami (ICCAS). As a student, she was involved in the Cuban-American University Student Association (CAUSA) at the University of Miami. Vanessa López writes a blog.

**Nathalie Marcos**, 27 October 2008, Coral Gables

Nathalie Marcos is an undergraduate student and executive vice president of the Cuban-American University Student Association (CAUSA) at the University of Miami.

**Antonio Mestre**, 27 October 2008, Coral Gables

Antonio Mestre volunteers at the Cuban Heritage Collection (CHC) at the University of Miami.

**Raúl Moas**, 27 October 2008, Coral Gables

Raúl Moas is president of the Cuban-American University Student Association (CAUSA). He is involved with *Raíces de Esperanza* (RDE), a youth organisation focused on humanitarian projects in Cuba.

**Daniel Morcate**, 19 January 2007, Doral

Daniel Morcate has worked for a number of different media in Miami. He is news-editor in chief at Univision and contributes opinion pieces to *El Nuevo Herald*.

**Eduardo Palmer**, 16 June 2006, Coral Gables

Eduardo (Eddi) Palmer looks back on a successful international career in television. He contributes programmes to TV Martí.

**Bernadette Pardo**, 13 June 2006, *Calle Ocho* area

Bernadette Pardo co-hosts a radio show for WQBA 1140AM.

**Ninoska Pérez Castellón**, 22 June 2006, *Calle Ocho* area

Ninoska Pérez Castellón is well-known presenter on Radio Mambí and volunteers as a spokesperson for the Cuban Liberty Council (CLC).

**Gerardo Reyes**, 7 June 2006, Downtown Miami

Gerardo is a staff reporter and commentator for *El Nuevo Herald*.

**Alfredo Richard**, 22 January 2007, Hialeah

Alfredo Richard is vice president of corporate communications at Telemundo.

**Juan Tamayo**, 15 January 2007, Downtown Miami

Juan Tamayo is a staff writer for *The Miami Herald*.

**Dr. Dr. Mercedes Sandoval**, 26 January 2007, Biscayne Bay area

Mercedes Sandoval is a researcher and scholar. Among other activities, she has contributed to Radio Martí.

**Prof. Jaime Suchlicki**, 6 June 2006, Coral Gables

Jaime Suchlicki is the director of the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies (ICCAS) at the University of Miami.

Interviews conducted online

**Pedro P. Arencibia**, October 2008

Pedro P. Arencibia is Madrid-based mathematician and former lecturer. He is a keen blogger and contributor to YouTube.

**Tracey Eaton**, November 2008

Tracey Eaton is a journalist, photographer and college instructor. He reported from Cuba for *The Dallas Morning News*. Tracey Eaton is an active blogger.

**Emilio Ichikawa**, October 2008

Emilio Ichikawa is a philosopher, author and critic. He runs a website which includes articles written by him and others. Emilio Ichikawa regularly contributes to *El Nuevo Herald*.

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